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imprint

ISBN eBook 978-3-360-50043-4

ISBN Print 978-3-360-02160-1

© 2013 The New Berlin, Berlin

Editor: Frank Schumann Cover design: Buchgut, Berlin

The Neue Berlin Verlagsgesellschaft mbH Neue Grünstr. 18, 10179 Berlin

The books published by Das Neue Berlin are published by the Eulenspiegel publishing group.

[www.eulenspiegel-verlagsgruppe.de](http://www.eulenspiegel-verlagsgruppe.de)

Walter Ulbricht

Contemporary witnesses remember

Edited by Egon Krenz

The new Berlin

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Preface

At the end of its days, the GDR had 17 million inhabitants. Their views on the land between Saßnitz and Suhl are extremely diverse and contradictory. Mostly factual, differentiated and free of ideology. In any case, this is different from certain authorities who are tasked with portraying the GDR as a big prison in which the management staff only thought about how to harass the citizens. What it was like, this GDR, and how everyone lived in it,

Above all, those who have been here at home can judge. My point of view is therefore one among many. Ulbricht and his views influenced my life and had a strong political influence on me.

However, the prevailing zeitgeist sorts biographies according to political interests. Makes himself the judge

“right” or “wrong” life. Anniversaries are used to glorify popular people and to defame those who think differently. The

The “good ones” usually come from the elites of the Federal Republic, while the “reviled ones” almost always come from the GDR.

Double standards for German biographies. Detached from

the time in which people lived and acted. A crazy view of history, beyond any objectivity.

Decades ago, an illustrated book about Ulbricht was published in the GDR. At that time - the demarcation of the two German states had long since been completed - the book had a title that was remarkable for the time: "A Life for Germany". Ulbricht and German history in the 20th century, this topic excites me. Today more than ever.

So I didn't have to think long when the publisher asked me to do so on the occasion of the 120th birthday of the first GDR Chairman of the State Council on June 30, 2013 and his death on August 1

In 1973, speaking to companions who still knew him from their own experiences.

Doesn't this project also run the risk of heroizing him? I pushed that thought away. And even if: As long as people in this country learn more about Hitler, his generals, his helpers, his women, his dogs, his bunker than about the fighters against fascism, a certain exaggeration even seems understandable to me.

Nevertheless, none of the contemporary witnesses I interviewed idealized Ulbricht. However, it became noticeable that when looking back on forty years of the GDR and the following decades

Ulbricht's contours are much clearer than they were perhaps during his lifetime. The saying goes that only when you leave the village will you realize how high the church tower is. Historical figures sometimes experience similar things. In any case, the verdict of posterity seems more objective and fair.

Ulbricht lived through three quarters of the 20th century. With ups and downs, victories and defeats, trials and tribulations. With the contradictions of an era that is often called the “age of extremes”. He confronted her as a communist. Didn't give in to difficulties, not to his own

political opponents, not slander. If he was wrong, he was capable of correcting himself. I don't expect his political opponents to praise him. But respect for the life of a German anti-fascist with communist sentiments would be appropriate given his biography.

Two world wars intervened in Ulbricht's life. He suffered the first as an involuntary soldier of the emperor. In the end he was a member of a workers' and soldiers' council. In his hometown of Leipzig he became a co-founder of the KPD. He fought the second long before the first shot. Even as

bourgeois politicians were still betting that the Nazis would collapse on their own. His party had predicted: Anyone who votes for Hitler will vote for war.

Two revolutions shaped his political career: the Russian October and the German November revolutions.

Drawing lessons from history was always important to him. It is said that historian was his third profession.

He was actively involved in the fundamental upheavals on German soil: the expropriation of Nazis and war criminals, the land, school and

and judicial reform, the elimination of the educational privilege of the rich, equal rights for men and women as well as the political participation of young people, their rights to work, education and vacation were part of the program of the SED, founded in 1946. Ulbricht, alongside Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, was one of the originators and organizers of these revolutionary transformations.

Many people hoped that socialist construction would solve the question raised by Friedrich Engels and asked again by Ulbricht's comrade-in-arms Rosa Luxemburg in 1915

"Socialism or barbarism?"<sup>1</sup>

be decided in favor of humanity. Ulbricht did not live to see the bitter defeat of 1989/90. He would probably have perceived her as his own too. He probably would have advised: Analyze exactly what was done wrong. Learn from the mistakes. But let's not denigrate the good and unique things that were achieved in the GDR. Only those who confidently defend what is worth defending about socialist values are taken seriously as contemporary witnesses.

Ulbricht was a patriot. He was also a convinced opponent of the division of Germany. I'm writing this in

Aware of his opponents' accusation that he was a divisive man. He always wanted the whole of Germany. Things shouldn't just be anti-fascist, democratic and socially just in half. It corresponded to his inner conviction what his friend, the poet Johannes R. Becher, wrote in the GDR national anthem: "Let us serve you for the good, Germany, united fatherland."

The Soviet Germany Notes of 1952, which could have cleared the way for a unified Germany, met with his approval.

When the West ignored the offer,

he campaigned for a confederation of the two German states. He called for "Germans to come to the table!" After these ideas could no longer be implemented - they were incompatible with the ideas of the leading powers in the two political and military alliances - Ulbricht saw the GDR as the one

"socialist state of the German nation", which should remain open to a left-wing option on the German question.

When the SPD announced its New Ostpolitik, Ulbricht warned the Eastern allies: The attack should not be aimed at Chancellor Brandt, but at Strauss<sup>2</sup> and von

Thadden<sup>3</sup>. Together we must win the West German population over to a policy of democratic progress. Moscow criticized this strategy as an illusion and distanced itself from him.

Ulbricht often found himself faced with opponents within his own ranks. Wherever he thought he recognized "factions," he fought for the unity of his party. At the end of the 1960s, when he still believed that his colleagues would follow him, he became increasingly isolated in the Politburo. He was getting old. Problems had also arisen nationally and internationally that overwhelmed him. This is also why

The change at the party leadership in 1971 cannot be reduced to Honecker's claim to power or Moscow's dominance. That would be a simplification of complex political processes.

It makes no sense to me to speculate whether the GDR could have asserted itself in 1989/90 with a politician of Ulbricht's stature.

As a Marxist, I know about the strong role of personalities in history. But it is also clear to me that the end of the GDR cannot only be attributed to the failure of individual people. Rather, a whole ensemble of objective and subjective, international and national factors were at work,

which even Walter Ulbricht could not have ignored. Not only Marxists, but also many bourgeois historians reject a speculative answer to the question

"What would have happened if..." – as unscientific.

I know the anti-communist prejudices that exist about Ulbricht. The vocabulary is the same as at the height of the Cold War:

"Stalin's governor in East Berlin" or

"An extended arm of the Kremlin,"

"Pankow's first man" or that

"Zone boss." You're still amused by his voice and his Saxon accent. The hostility has nothing to do with it

its done before the end of the GDR.

Politicians and the media often blame the GDR alone for the injustice, hardship and heartlessness of the Cold War between the two world systems. As if it had been at war with itself and the Federal Republic had been an upright peacemaker.

There are usually always two sides to arguments. The sequence is always action and reaction. No page is subscribed exclusively to "good" and none only to "evil". At the end, no one leaves the field with a clean slate. The Federal Republic of Germany, theirs

Institutions and their political staff are of course excluded: they were and are always blameless. At least that is the common reading of the historical picture of the GDR prescribed by the German Bundestag.<sup>4</sup>

If this interpretation of history is used, the actual historical role of the GDR is even exaggerated. The smaller German state, which Adenauer disparagingly called a "Soviet zone," is subsequently constructed into a superior power that supposedly dictated what Moscow should or should not do. Ulbricht Stalin is said to have founded the

"unloved GDR" and forced Khrushchev to build socialism and to build the wall. The alleged East Berlin guardianship even became a matter of legal notice. The Federal Constitutional Court untruthfully established the influence of the USSR on GDR border security "was rather small."<sup>5</sup>

In 2003, a television station identified the "greatest German" with the help of its viewers. It should be Konrad Adenauer. Karl Marx came third behind Martin Luther. It was said that the majority of East Germans even saw Marx in first place,

which speaks for their realistic understanding of history. If Adenauer was the front runner, one should also remember a statement made by Sebastian Haffner in 1966.

The bourgeois journalist and historian asked why Ulbricht became the most successful German politician after Bismarck and alongside Adenauer?

I find it remarkable that Adenauer and Ulbricht were mentioned in the same breath by knowledgeable people.

However: They were never political brothers. They were antipodes. Bitter opponents. Each in his own interest

Class.

When Adenauer was already in the service of the German Empire, the young social democrat Ulbricht followed the political credo of August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht:

"Not a man or a dime to this system." When, after the First World War, Adenauer was concerned with separatist ideas about the formation of a West German state in the Rhineland, Ulbricht sided with Karl Liebknecht, who died on November 9, 1918 from the balcony of the Berlin Palace proclaimed the socialist republic. This balcony was added to the State Council building in 1964

integrated into the GDR, the official residence of the GDR head of state.

During my research for this book, I came across an spy report from a state hunter corps in Leipzig

May 27, 1919. It says that "the communist Ulbricht, employee of the Red Flag, must be monitored." In case of special findings:

"Immediate report."<sup>6</sup> For decades, Ulbricht remained the "journeyman without a country" - as socialists, social democrats and communists were once called. He became the hunted, the persecuted, the imprisoned, the ostracized and later driven out of the country. Together with Ernst Thälmann, Wilhelm Pieck and

On the other hand, he fought in the German Reichstag for the social interests of workers and against the impending fascist danger.

The public dispute between the Berlin communist leader Ulbricht and the Berlin Nazi Gauleiter Goebbels in the Berlin Saalbau Friedrichshain demonstrated the courage of the Leipzig native in the anti-fascist struggle.

When the Nazis withdrew the mandate of the KPD's 81 Reichstag members, including Walter Ulbricht, in March 1933, Adenauer's center faction in Cologne declared about the enabling law: "The person appointed by the Reich President, through whom

The government that has been confirmed for the successful course of the national revolution must not be jeopardized, otherwise the consequences are unforeseeable. [...] We welcome the destruction of communism and the fight against Marxism.»

When Ulbricht was already wanted by Hitler's henchmen, Adenauer wrote a ten-page letter to the Prussian Interior Minister on August 10, 1934. In it he claimed that he had "always treated the NSDAP correctly." He had resisted an order from the Prussian State Ministry to arrest National Socialist officials "for the purpose of

"Discipline" because he "considered such a measure to be unjustified and unjust." He had already declared in 1932 that "a party as large as the NSDAP must definitely be represented at the top in the government."

Even though Adenauer was later briefly interned a few times and the Nazis deposed him as mayor of Cologne, he did not suffer hardship. Ulbricht, on the other hand, had to go into exile and fight for his existence. But above all against the Nazi dictatorship. German officers were also involved in the Leningrad blockade, in which 1.1 million Leningraders fell victim.

who were later allowed to hold top positions in the Federal Republic of Germany. Ulbricht was also in the trenches. Before Stalingrad and on the anti-war side.

Risking his life, he helped save the lives of German soldiers. Together with the poets Erich Weinert and Willi Bredel, he shouted over the loudspeaker: "Whether you fall or save your life by surrendering, that doesn't change the outcome of the war. Your death will only destroy your family and the future of your children. Our people do not need your senseless death, but rather your life for the work in the future Germany!"<sup>7</sup>

Ulbricht was one of those Germans who demonstrated with their actions that one did not necessarily have to march with the Nazis or condone their crimes.

Certainly, courage was part of it. Ulbricht had it.

He returned from Soviet emigration with a group of German communists on April 30, 1945. The battle for the German capital was still raging. It was important to him that life in the devastated Berlin got back on track as quickly as possible. To do this, he sought unprejudiced contact with personalities from the bourgeois camp, for example

Actor Heinz Rühmann or the doctor Ferdinand Sauerbruch. The non-party Arthur Werner became the first mayor of Berlin. In an appeal from the KPD to the German people, which was coordinated with Stalin, four weeks after the end of the Nazi dictatorship and the war, goals were set for all of Germany. The division of the country was not intended. The communists wanted to do that with everyone

"The path of establishing an anti-fascist, democratic regime, a parliamentary republic with all democratic rights and freedoms for the people." They agreed with Moscow

agreed that it would be wrong to "impose the Soviet system on Germany."<sup>8</sup>

Ulbricht and his comrades campaigned for consistent punishment of Nazi and war criminals. They gave those who followed the system a chance to start anew. However, it is unthinkable that people like Globke, Filbinger and many other accused Nazis would have been allowed to hold office in the GDR. The co-author and commentator of the Nuremberg racial laws, Globke, was sentenced to life imprisonment in the GDR, while in the Federal Republic he became the most powerful man behind Adenauer.

The negative attitude of the

Western powers, especially the Federal Republic, against the Soviet Germany notes of 1952 blocked the path to German unity for decades. On July 20, 1952, the Rheinische Merkur quoted Adenauer with the illuminating statement:

»What lies east of the Werra and Elbe are Germany's unredeemed provinces. Therefore the task is not reunification, but liberation. The word reunification should finally disappear. It has already caused too much harm. Liberation is the watchword."

As a result, the Cold War de facto became World War III. A cold

Yes, but always on the verge of a possible nuclear war. Walter Ulbricht was credited with having demonstrated strong nerves in extremely complicated times. In 1968 he ensured that the National People's Army of the GDR did not take part in the military measures of the Warsaw contracting states in Czechoslovakia. The National People's Army of the GDR remains the only German army that neither fought wars nor took part in military actions against other peoples.

You can forgive the fact that the GDR is commonly called a dictatorship by its opponents. they do not want

realize that every state is an instrument of power for the ruling class. In the constitution of 1968, which was drawn up under Ulbricht's chairmanship, it is formulated as follows: "The German Democratic Republic is a socialist state of workers and farmers." What is outrageous, however, is to describe the GDR as a "second German dictatorship," which means is placed on a par with the Nazi dictatorship. This not only trivializes fascism.

It insults those people who chose the GDR out of anti-fascist sentiments. At the same time it is a falsification of historical facts. From

The 300,000 party members that the KPD had in 1933 were killed by the Nazis

150,000 persecuted, imprisoned or murdered. A bitter testimony to the KPD's sacrifice-filled fight against fascism and war, which is hardly appreciated in today's Germany.

Since the GDR no longer exists, politicians and the media have been repeating an incomplete quote from Ulbricht from a press conference on June 15, 1961.

"Nobody has any intention of building a wall," goes half the sentence.

But Ulbricht added: "We are in favor of contractual relations between West Berlin and the government

German Democratic Republic." The fact that he favored a contractual solution is intentionally concealed. Ultimately, the mutilation of quotes is intended to prove that Ulbricht was a liar. The political logic is completely ignored: If the strategist Ulbricht two months before the 13th

If he had planned a "wall" in August 1961 or had already decided to build it, he would probably not have been so foolish as to deny this at an international press conference. Something like that went against his character.

At that time, Moscow and Berlin were still expecting a peace treaty

A week and a half earlier, at his summit meeting with Kennedy in Vienna, Khrushchev had announced that he would conclude a deal with the GDR - in the event that no one came along

"All of Germany" would come into being. The conflict between the USA and the USSR escalated dramatically in the period that followed. The Achilles heel was the open border between NATO and the Warsaw Treaty in Berlin. It was a question of life: war or peace.<sup>9</sup> The heads of state and party leaders of the Warsaw contracting states only decided at their meeting from 3 to 5. August 1961 in Moscow

Measures that were then implemented on August 13, 1961.

Ulbricht is often provided with labels. For some he is a dogmatist, for others a reformer. Neither really does it justice. Undoubtedly, he too was not free from the dogmatic views that existed in the world communist movement under Stalin's influence.

This also contributed to misjudgments and wrong decisions in the GDR. But he was a creative person. Always asked the question what could be done better. So in the 1960s came a comprehensive socialist one

Reform program came about. From the youth communiqué to fundamental political and legal questions. It is difficult to assess retrospectively whether the GDR would have made better progress because, for example, important things such as the New Economic System of management and planning practically did not get off to a good start.

Ulbricht was a staunch friend of the Soviet Union. It was precisely because of his internationalist attitude that he stood up for the national interests of the Germans. Whether with Stalin, Khrushchev or Brezhnev - he was no sycophant. He also addressed sensitive topics. He was no one to them

more comfortable, but always a sincere partner.

After Gorbachev and his supporters and supporters had destroyed the USSR from above almost 20 years after Ulbricht's death and had previously handed the GDR over to Helmut Kohl on a silver platter, many people were asked the question (and it still does): Was our big brother always honest? to us? How sovereign was the GDR actually?

I do not separate both questions from May 8, 1945. Nor from the burden that the Soviet Union bore for maintaining peace worldwide. The GDR was no more and no less sovereign than the USSR

Federal Republic towards its occupying powers too. Both were members of the respective military alliance. I remember how Leonid Brezhnev warned Erich Honecker in July 1970: "The GDR is the result of the Second World War, our achievement, which was achieved with the blood of the Soviet people. [...] We have troops with you. Erich, I tell you openly, never forget this: The GDR cannot exist without us, without the Soviet Union, its power and strength. Without us there is no GDR."<sup>10</sup>

No one from the GDR leadership ever questioned this principle. He

was part of our political rules of life. In a fateful way and with a diametrically opposite meaning, it was even confirmed by Gorbachev. When the strength and power of the Soviet Union was lost, this also affected its little brother, the GDR. She paid for it with her downfall. But that must not be a reason to forget what the people of the Soviet Union have achieved for social progress. There would be no relatively normal relations between Germans and Russians today if the USSR and the GDR had not laid the foundation for it. I wish in the

Today's Federal Republic has more respect for Russia, its people and, above all, the millions of victims of German cruelty in the Second World War.

One of the shortcomings of the previous socialism was that there were no fixed rules for replacing the first man in the party and state. This had a negative impact when Ulbricht reached an age that would have suggested a withdrawal from current politics. When he offered to resign in the late 1960s, Brezhnev advised against it.

Gomulka in Poland is no longer firmly in the saddle and Husák in the CSSR is not yet secure enough. In this political

According to Brezhnev, Ulbricht's withdrawal would send the wrong political signal. Ulbricht showed discipline and stayed.

However, he became increasingly stubborn. There was concern in Moscow about this, as well as about differences of opinion in the SED Politburo regarding Ulbricht's concept of supporting the SPD's Eastern policy.

On July 28, 1970, Brezhnev and Honecker spoke to each other about Ulbricht and behind his back. The CPSU General Secretary complained about a "certain arrogance" towards the Soviet Union. He didn't like the fact that Ulbricht was supposedly acting as if the GDR had this

"best model of socialism". He also criticized Ulbricht's intention to accommodate the Brandt government. Brezhnev felt he had to warn against illusions about Brandt. It is allowed

"There will be no process of rapprochement between the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR." Brandt and Strauss would want such a process. In this respect there is no difference between the two. According to Brezhnev, West Germany is, in relation to the GDR, like any other country abroad. The CPSU leader said of Ulbricht: He has his merits, he cannot simply be pushed aside. But he is old. Even that

Opponents would expect Honecker to lead the party and "Walter to act as chairman of the State Council." This initiated the process that ultimately led to Ulbricht losing his position as First Secretary of the SED Central Committee at the beginning of May 1971.

To prepare this book, I met with Ulbricht's living companions. Many of them came out of captivity after the war. They were not allowed to attend high school until 1945. The educational privilege of those in power until then had excluded them from this. Ulbricht and his comrades broke with this tradition.

They created the Workers and Peasants Faculties. Hermann Kant impressively described the fate of this generation in his GDR bestseller "The Aula". A large part of the GDR intelligentsia grew up from the lowest social strata of society. In 1989, many of this generation worked at the interfaces of politics and business, education and technology, culture and sport, and in health and social services. This unique cultural-political achievement of the GDR was destroyed by the Federal Republic of Germany in 1990 for political reasons.

There are seventy in this book

Ulbricht's companions have their say. The encounters with them, some of whom are ten, fifteen or even almost twenty years older than me, touched me very deeply. Some have been bedridden for years. But unbroken. Their living conditions are modest. Your penal pension is often not enough to pay for a place in a nursing home or retirement home. They think a lot about themselves, the GDR and our defeat, evaluate their own actions in a differentiated way, but above all they remained true to themselves and the cause they represented.

I can already hear the objection: Everything is subjective! Yes, as is the case with memories. perspectives can

to be different. But facts should remain facts. Some memories fade. Some are subsequently given greater weight.

Others only come back to life from today's perspective. Is that why you can denounce them? Just like the actors in the old Federal Republic, they belong in the German history book.

Konrad Adenauer has a remarkable insight:

»The establishment of a new government system must not lead to political persecution of supporters of the old system in any part of Germany. For this reason, in the opinion of the

The federal government must ensure that after the reunification of Germany, no one is persecuted because of their political views or simply because they were active in authorities or political organizations in a part of Germany can be heard: "Anyone who took part in the GDR has to put up with questions."

Why only those who took part in the GDR?

It is high time for all Germans to get to know the actual history of the old Federal Republic, not just the embellished one.

I am the editor of this book, not the author of the following articles. The information provided by the authors and my interview partners is their own. Not every representation corresponds to my intentions. I remember some things differently, but that doesn't necessarily mean that the other person is mistaken. For me, the value of this book lies in the original memories of many and in their diversity. A vivid picture of a historical personality emerges from many individual elements.

No matter how diverse the individual views may be, they all converge on one point: Walter Ulbricht was one

recognized labor leader. A far-sighted politician. A worker who became a statesman of stature.

May the contemporary witnesses and testimonies in this volume help to promote dialogue about the post-war history of both German states. As she was and not as certain people would have liked her to be.

Egon Krenz,

Dierhagen in May 2013

Rosa Luxemburg 1915 in her work "The Crisis of Social Democracy" ("Junius Brochure"): "Friedrich Engels once said: Civil society is faced with a dilemma, either a transition to socialism or a relapse into barbarism. What does a mean?

'Relapse into barbarism' at our height

European civilization? Up until now we have probably all thoughtlessly read and repeated the words without suspecting their terrible seriousness. A look around us at this moment shows what a relapse of civil society into barbarism means. This world war is a relapse into barbarism. The triumph of imperialism leads to the destruction of culture - sporadically during the duration of a modern war and finally if the period of world wars that has now begun continues unchecked to its ultimate conclusion. So today, just as Friedrich Engels predicted a generation ago, forty years ago, we are faced with a choice: either the triumph of imperialism and the downfall of all culture, as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration, a large cemetery; or victory of socialism, that is, the conscious fighting action of the international proletariat

against imperialism and its method: war. This is a dilemma of world history, an either-or, the scales of which sway trembling before the decision of the class-conscious proletariat.

Franz Josef Strauss (1915-1988), CSU politician who was one of the harshest critics of Brandt's Ostpolitik. Strauss was Federal Minister for Special Tasks (1953-1955), Federal Minister for Atomic Affairs (1955-1956) and Federal Minister of Defense (1956-1962) in the Adenauer governments. In the grand coalition under Prime Minister Kurt Georg Kiesinger (1966-1969) he was Federal Minister of Finance. As Bavarian Prime Minister (1978-1988), he was defeated as the Union's candidate for chancellor in the 1980 federal election against Helmut Schmidt (SPD).

Adolf von Thadden (1921-1996),

Co-founder of the NPD. He and his neo-fascist party narrowly failed to gain entry into the German Bundestag in 1969.

Report of the Study Commission of the German Bundestag "Overcoming the Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in the Process of German Unity" with 15,000 sheets of appendices.

Decision of the Federal Constitutional Court of October 24, 1996, page 57.

Secret facility from May 27, 1919, Institute for German Military History, Archives Department, files no. R 837, p. 64.

Leaflet from Ulbricht, Weinert and Bredel from the Stalingrad Front, early January 1943. It served as a pass to cross over to the Red Army side. Out of:

"Walter Ulbricht, a life for Germany", Leipzig 1968, page 67.

Revolutionary German party programs. Berlin 1964, page 196.

See Heinz Keßler/Fritz Streletz, Without the wall there would have been war. Berlin 2011.

The quote and the following ones from Breshnew come from a note of the conversation between Breshnew and Honecker on July 28, 1970. The conversation was reproduced in a volume of documents that Erich Honecker gave to all members and candidates of the Politburo of the SED Central Committee at the beginning of 1989 for information handed over.

Memorandum of the Federal Government of September 2, 1956, published in the Bulletin of the Federal Government Press and Information Office of September 8, 1956, No.

169, p. 1630.

## Positioning

Herbert Graf

Twenty years at Ulbricht's side

Herbert Graf, born in 1930, member of the anti-fascist youth committee in Egeln in 1945, apprenticeship and journeyman in the butcher trade. Attended the FDJ state youth school, studied at the Workers' and Farmers' Faculty in Halle. From 1950 to 1954 studied economics in Berlin.

Walter Ulbricht's employee since 1954, initially in the government from 1961

until 1973 in the State Council of the GDR. 1969 legal doctorate. 1978 appointment as full professor of constitutional law. Teaching, research and consulting work in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. From 1990 to 2000 legal advisor in Berlin cable companies. Retired since 2000.

You worked alongside Walter Ulbricht for 20 years. When did you first meet him?

In September 1948 at a state youth conference of the FDJ in the Volkspark in Halle. Delegates from all

Circles exchanged experiences in youth work and discussed future projects. Ulbricht, then 55, took an active part in the deliberations. He livened up and deepened the debate with questions and encouraged us to present our thoughts, problems and difficulties bluntly.

It was hot that late summer weekend and the hall was crowded. Like us, he had taken off his jacket and rolled up his shirt sleeves. We felt that he was comfortable. He also sought to talk to us young people during breaks in consultation. Stubborn asked

he again and again. But he could also listen patiently.

Just a few years later – immediately after your university studies – Ulbricht became your boss. Do you remember your first conversation with him?

The first conversation took place in 1955 in the official residence of the GDR Council of Ministers, which was then the building of the former Prussian state parliament. Otto Gotsche, head of the secretariat, introduced me to the boss with the laconic remark: "This is the comrade Herbert Graf we were talking about." As I shook hands, I noticed Ulbricht's large, well-worked hands

on. The welcome was friendly. Unexpectedly for me, he asked whether we at the University of Economics had also thoroughly studied and evaluated Lenin's work "Better Less, But Better."

"Read, yes," I replied, "but not worked through."

He responded to my comment that Stalin's work "Economic Problems of Socialism" was at the center of economic lectures and seminars in 1953 and 1954 with a smile and the comment that I still had a lot to learn. In my work here I should always draw inspiration from Lenin's

Let the principle guide you: "Do not accept a word in good faith, do not say a word against your conscience, never be afraid to admit every difficulty and do not shy away from any struggle to achieve a seriously set goal."<sup>1</sup>

After this instructive greeting, he immediately moved on to the next work. It was about contributions to the preparation of a presentation that he wanted to give at the opening of the GDR's first construction conference in April 1955.

You have published your memories of Walter Ulbricht.<sup>2</sup> It is not just historians who argue about people

and the politician Ulbricht. Their judgments are sometimes quite contradictory. What explanation do you have for this? As with all strong personalities, Schiller's saying also applies to Walter Ulbricht: "Confused by the parties' favor and hatred, his character image fluctuates throughout history." Those who advocated for a non-exploitative, just and peace-loving social order in the 20th century are the judges about the work of Walter Ulbricht is fundamentally different than the representatives of the capitalist world. That suited the pro-capitalist forces

political course in East Germany since 1945. They were against the anti-fascist democratic reforms, against the implementation of the decisions of the Potsdam Conference in the economy, administration, public education and justice and therefore wanted a division of Germany. As in the Weimar Republic, bourgeois politicians in the West treated German communists - especially their representatives - as enemies who had to be eliminated.

There wasn't just the class enemy...

Critics of Ulbricht within the party essentially had three reasons. First, there were "homemade" mistakes,

Misunderstandings and communication problems that led to criticism of Walter Ulbricht's way of working. There were also internal and public disputes with him. If there were fundamental questions, they were discussed in the committees and, if necessary, decided according to the majority principle.

Secondly, it should be borne in mind that in the first post-war decade - in accordance with international regulations - "supreme political power" was exercised by "the commander-in-chief of the armed forces in his zone of occupation in accordance with the instructions of his respective

Government<sup>3</sup> exercised. It was not brought to market that their orders on domestic political matters (e.g. the increase in standards, prices and taxes in 1952/53) provoked critical reactions from the public towards representatives of the GDR, although they were not made by them but by the Soviet ones Military Administration (SMAD).

Thirdly (as can be seen, among other things, from the correspondence between Rudolf Herrnstadt and the Soviet High Commissioner Vladimir S. Semyonov)<sup>4</sup> in some fundamental disputes - especially in the 1950s

take into account that Soviet politicians influenced internal party disputes in the SED and how this happened.

The different interests and understanding of history of not a few critics of Ulbricht's politics lead to very different judgments. At the beginning of the 1970s he was criticized for his reticence towards Moscow's orientation. The transfer of decisions from party committees to the State Council was chalked up to him as a deviation from the Soviet model of socialism.<sup>5</sup>

In contrast to this are the verdicts that Ulbricht is supposedly in bondage to

Executors of Soviet policy and called Stalinists. It should also be noted that the same historians who accused him of dogmatism in earlier publications now primarily assess his politics in the 1960s as unorthodox and successful.<sup>6</sup>

Over the past two decades, the opening of important archives has shed some light on previously hidden backgrounds of post-war politics. This also contributed to the objectification and revision of some critical judgments about Walter Ulbricht's thoughts and actions. It has happened - although not for all political ones

forces - a noticeably fairer judgment of his work and his merits in building a new social order was formed.

In 1966, the well-known conservative historian and journalist Sebastian Haffner described Ulbricht as the most successful German politician after Bismarck and alongside Adenauer.

On what did he base this judgment?

Haffner also wrote: "People will be puzzling over Ulbricht's secret of success for a very long time, and it will probably never be completely unraveled."<sup>7</sup> In my experience, Ulbricht's life's achievement is based on his relationship to the German roots

Labor movement and its ideals. It is based on the wealth of his national and international experiences and his strong character traits. Even middle-class biographers attest to his tireless hard work, practicality, strong organizational skills and strategic thinking, as well as tactical agility. The successes and defeats in the struggle of the German working class that Ulbricht experienced over the course of his six decades of political work have made him a strong personality with clear contours.

The writer Gerhard Zwerenz,

who critically assessed Ulbricht's politics on quite a few issues, once wrote: "Walter Ulbricht represents, in his person and as an exponent of his party, the continuity of the German revolutionary tradition; and by creating a state, he thwarted all West German efforts to eliminate the tradition of the left in Germany."<sup>8</sup>

In this context, we should remember Ulbricht's significant contribution in the illegality, in exile and on the Stalingrad front in the fight against German fascism. His political ability and his organizational talent proved to be the case

overcoming the consequences of war in destroyed Berlin. Two weeks after the arrival of the Ulbricht group, operational administrations were formed in most Berlin districts, the first buses drove on streets cleared of rubble, the subway was running again in some sections and the first concert took place in the opera.

Even in these rough early days, Ulbricht focused on attracting people from all social circles and classes.



"It has to look democratic, but we have to have everything in our hands."

This is how Wolfgang Leonhard describes Ulbricht's working methods in the first weeks after the war.

Yes. This sentence still flickers again and again - celebrated by Leonhard in his theatrical diction - like a divine judgment across the German television screens. This is despite the fact that Leonhard admitted years ago in a writing: "Ulbricht was interested in ending the discussion that evening (on which the sentence spread by Leonhard is said to have been uttered – HG). We should win people over to our work, as many people as possible and from as different political camps as possible. It was important to him

that we do not lose our influence over this."<sup>9</sup> That sounds different than Leonhard's old denunciatory formula, which is still widespread.

Walter Ulbricht was not one of those quips who reduce their positions to one sentence. His concern was to establish an exploitation-free, socialist society under the special conditions of the German post-war situation. Within the scope of his freedom of action, he successfully searched for suitable solutions for socialist progress at the interface of the systems in Europe under the conditions of the Cold War.

He paid particular attention to an organic connection between the requirements of the scientific and technical revolution (and its possibilities) and the democratic development of the political system of socialism in the GDR. When Ulbricht resigned as First Secretary of the SED Central Committee in 1971, his party and the state were on solid foundations, the state budget was balanced and the amount of the country's foreign liabilities was minimal in relation to the gross domestic product, which we called national income.

Let's talk about how to get him in the

experienced work. What do you particularly remember?

Walter Ulbricht was a thoroughbred politician with strong judgment. His political convictions and decades of experience were combined with a sure instinct for tactically necessary steps. Arbitrariness was alien to him. He was able to think big, i.e. strategically, while at the same time not ignoring details - especially in the economic area. He was aware of the GDR's balance of payments and the main indicators of economic development at all times.

Ulbricht did not belong to the guild of so-called silver tongues, those charismatic seducers who influence others solely through their charisma and rhetoric. His rhetorical talent was limited. He impressed with his strategic ability, his social skills, his emotional intelligence, his historical knowledge and his strong ability to explore the scope for action under complicated conditions.

In a conversation with Manfred Wekwerth, I learned that Ulbricht's rhetoric was something Brecht had none at all

problems. On the contrary. He thought that this forced the speaker to concentrate more on the content - and his listeners should do the same, Brecht warned his young colleagues.

Brecht obviously recognized better than many others that Ulbricht felt a strong desire to seek out new things and use them for social progress, although he did not act as if he had found the philosopher's stone. He remained modest and reserved in his assessment of his own performance. But admittedly: his pronounced self-confidence, formed through many bitter experiences,

The abundance and explosiveness of the tasks to be solved also reduced the scope for self-doubt.

Let's put it this way: In difficult times, Walter Ulbricht proved to be a man who could weather storms. He was suspicious of Laues.

The circumstances of his development, the long-term threat to his life and freedom, the accusations in capitalist Germany, the conditions of illegality in the time of fascism, emigration and, last but not least, the experience of Stalin's arbitrariness and crimes, made Walter Ulbricht an experienced, fearless and courageous politician

let be. All of these experiences left their mark. But they didn't lead to a loss of reality. From what I saw of him up close, he possessed both principled, tactical ability and a sense of scope for maneuver among those in power.

In all phases of his political work, his maxim was: Everything with the people, everything for the people. The slogan: "Plan with us, work with us, govern with us!" corresponded to his understanding of democracy.

A man without fault?

Ulbricht was not an infallible saint. He too was not free from errors and

made mistakes and was not spared disappointments. He was not inclined to general discussions about errors.

Didn't this aversion ultimately lead to undesirable developments not being stopped in time and things worthy of criticism getting under the carpet?

That cannot be ruled out. Incidentally, this was also discussed in the SED Central Committee. During the debate, a comrade quoted the verse: "You should not waste time talking about this wonderful time. / You shall not rejoice in idle strife. / For the plow, and the ox, and the germinating seed, / need little

Words, they need action."

Ulbricht agreed. His priority was to analyze the causes and consequences of wrong decisions promptly and thoroughly and to quickly resolve any problems that arose "as we move forward." But he was quite prepared to correct himself publicly if necessary. Ulbricht could also claim with every right: only those who do nothing and have nothing to decide are free from mistakes. He had, once again, a great responsibility in difficult times. That doesn't excuse anything, but it explains a lot. That's why it falls short and, in my opinion, is an expression of ignorance

and ignorance of the facts or the willingness to adapt to the "judgment" of the notorious opponents of the GDR when Walter Ulbricht is described as "Stalin's enforcer in the GDR"<sup>10</sup>.

Such verdicts about the politics shaped by Ulbricht in the first post-war decade ignore the political balance of power, particularly the role of the Soviet military administration in Germany (SMAD). The SMAD had more than 80,000 employees, and their powers, instructions and recommendations also determined the scope of action for a long time

Leadership of the SED. However, the people at the top of the party bore the main responsibility for implementation and for their consequences - both for justified and problematic decisions made by the Soviet side. Anyone who wants to judge fairly about events and decisions from that time should not shy away from the effort of checking who and whose interests acted.

Wilhelm Pieck, Otto Grotewohl and especially Walter Ulbricht are blamed for many things that were not decided or caused by them, especially with regard to the development in 1952/53.

The archive material that has recently been opened up makes it clear that Walter Ulbricht courageously and consistently stood up for the interests of the German socialists and the German people.

"The relations between the GDR and the Russians were more complicated than we might have assumed at the time,"<sup>11</sup> summarizes the American historian Fritz Stern.

And Julij A. Kwizinskiy, diplomat at the USSR embassy in Berlin and later ambassador in Bonn, describes his country's relationship with the GDR as "schizophrenic in some respects."<sup>12</sup>

I asked Margot Honecker how she assessed Kwizinski's statement, and she said that the complicated and complex relationship between the GDR and the USSR, between the SED and the CPSU, could not be reduced to such a sentence. What do you think about that?

The dominant thing in the relationship between the USSR and the GDR was the common foundations and goals of social development. There was clear agreement regarding the social characteristics of working class states, in their appeal to Marxism-

Leninism, in terms of its development goals and in its solidarity with the peoples and movements fighting for liberation and its confrontation with the strategy and politics of capitalism.

The huge, sacrificial contribution to the victory of the anti-Hitler coalition over fascist Germany and its position as the first socialist state in history gave the Soviet Union special weight in the international arena. This had an unmistakable impact on political developments in the zone occupied by the Red Army and in the German Democratic Republic.

Contrary to the expectations of the German socialists, the relations between the two states - despite agreement on the basic questions mentioned - were not always free of conflict, and the discussions between the leaders did not take place on an equal footing.

When the foreign leadership of the Communist Party of Germany had its headquarters in Moscow, there was not one meeting between Stalin and the KPD figures living in Moscow, there was not one conversation. The German communists living in exile in the Soviet Union instead endured that many

Comrades were arrested, convicted and sometimes shot, often on baseless charges. Even members of the KPD leadership such as Pieck, Ulbricht and Florin were not spared from outrageous accusations. The document can be found in the central archive of the KGB (now FSB).

"On the counter-revolutionary Bukharinist-Trotskyist organization Pieck-Ulbricht".<sup>13</sup>

Georgi Dimitrov's diary contains on

April 13, 1939, the entry: "Ulbricht - the NKVD allegedly gave instructions to inform about him (i.e. questionable element)."<sup>14</sup>

Despite their own threat, how

Documents and statements from contemporary witnesses - including Herbert Wehner - that have now been discovered prove beyond a doubt that Wilhelm Pieck and Walter Ulbricht courageously stood up for comrades who were arrested and released from NKVD custody.<sup>15</sup>

In the same way, Wilhelm Pieck, Walter Ulbricht and Otto Grotewohl later fought energetically and mostly successfully against the wave of trials against upright communists staged by Soviet intelligence chief Lavrenti P. Beria in Hungary, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia reaching the GDR. However, it could not be prevented that Franz Dahlem, Paul Merker and

other deserving comrades were exposed to unjustified accusations under the influence of Beria.

Anyone who experienced something like this and took part in the conflicts was deeply suspicious of such ruling behavior with Stalin's provenance. After those difficult times in exile in Moscow, Walter Ulbricht knew better than anyone else the rules and pitfalls of political action in the Soviet sphere of influence. His political strategy, derived from the ideals of the workers' movement, and his constant analysis of the possible combined in his actions to form an organic unity. But: Neither

The bitter experiences in emigration to Moscow and his differences with the political and military leadership of the USSR damaged Walter Ulbricht's warm ties to Lenin's country.

In the forty years of the GDR's existence, such problems were not revealed. This was particularly true of the obvious differences with Lavrenti Beria. He distrusted the leadership of the SED and the GDR. Since the end of 1952 he has been making secret preparations for one "Sale of the GDR".

The significant reservations about the High Commissioner's actions

the USSR in the GDR, Vladimir Semyonov, were also only processed internally. In the critical days of June 1953, Moscow's representatives in Berlin negotiated openly with the LDPD politician Hermann Moritz Kastner - a BRD employee who was later exposed as a top agent - about changes in the politics and composition of the GDR government. Semyonov and Kastner conducted these negotiations so blatantly that Spiegel wrote about it on the 15th.

June 1953 was able to report.<sup>16</sup>

But in the GDR there were neither the associated anger nor the efforts to solve such problems

cleared out, made public. It was not uncommon for mutual declarations of loyal cooperation to cover the simple fact that differences had been resolved.

If the German partners took a corrective action against Soviet guidelines, this was done - as Otto Grotewohl did after the XXth century. Party congress of the CPSU before the plenum of the SED Central Committee reported - mostly "quietly, selflessly and successfully".<sup>17</sup>

I know from Werner Eberlein, who was very close to Walter Ulbricht, that Ulbricht never spoke to him about his father, who was one of Stalin's victims

Arbitrariness heard, spoke. He himself never asked him such a question. Nevertheless, the topic was present in the party. In 1988, a policy document from the SED Central Committee said: "German communists were also affected by illegal and unjustified repression in the Soviet Union in the second half of the 1930s. As a result of these events, which were deeply contradictory to the essence of socialism, the KPD lost proven members and officials loyal to the working class and the party, including Hugo Eberlein, Leo Flieg, Felix Halle, Werner Hirsch, Hans Kippenberg and Willy

Leow, Heinz Neumann, Hermann Remmele, Hermann Schubert and Fritz Schulte. After the XX. At the 1956 party congress of the CPSU and after all the circumstances became known, the SED restored the party membership and party honor of the German communists affected by repression."<sup>18</sup> Did Walter Ulbricht ever comment on these tragic events?

I've never experienced that. Werner Eberlein gives the reasons in his memoirs<sup>19</sup>, and he also discussed them in an article in Neues Deutschland.

»We suppressed what happened in the Soviet Union - also out of shame that something like that happened in ours

Soviet Union happened."<sup>20</sup> Silence turned out to be a form of silent communication. One's own injury should not be revealed, the socialist ideal should be protected and not damaged. That was obviously the main motive for such an attitude.

Repression was a means of coping with the inexplicable.

But Ulbricht's behavior corresponded to that of a person who was knowledgeable and who knew these processes. As far as I know, he didn't leave anything written about it. Every answer from uninvolved parties remains a hypothesis.

It is known and proven by documents, as I already mentioned, that Wilhelm

Pieck, Otto Grotewohl and Walter Ulbricht worked intensively for the release of imprisoned and exiled comrades and for their relocation to the GDR. However, their efforts took place through internal channels, often in tough and often protracted disputes with Soviet authorities. The example of Werner Eberlein alone - in his memoirs he describes the complications of his return from Soviet exile - makes it clear what hurdles often had to be overcome.

Historians and journalists are still arguing about the events and decisions of 1956. You too

written about it.

Without a doubt, that year was particularly explosive. Despite numerous publications, important questions still remain unanswered. In the context of the treatment of the XX. At the party congress of the CPSU there is an undifferentiated debate about Stalinism, which in my opinion leads to a narrow view of history. With a general suspicion derived from this about everything that happened politically in the GDR, important historical facts are removed from proper examination and thus from objective evaluation.

It is not uncommon for the real chances of the ideas discussed in 1956 to be discussed

Opposition projects are overrated and the involvement of some actors in the secret services is trivialized or even ignored. And it's not convincing if the GDR's politics after that

XX. Congress of the CPSU should be judged primarily from the perspective of those forces that were unable to find a majority for themselves and their positions in the political disputes.

Anyone who wasn't there at the time can hardly imagine how complicated the situation was in the second half of 1956. The Cold War escalated dramatically. France and France intervened in Egypt

Great Britain went military, there were armed riots in Poland and Hungary, in the Federal Republic the KPD and other organizations were banned and over 100,000 investigations were initiated against members and sympathizers of the party and judgments were passed. NATO evaluated its experiences in the 1955 exercise DECO II, which dealt with the occupation of the territory of the GDR up to the Oder-Neisse line.<sup>21</sup> A spy tunnel that was built by American and British secret service agents from West Berlin into the territory of the GDR had been advanced to

Tapping into Soviet troops' telephone connections was exposed. Political committees of the Federal Republic, known as the Research Advisory Board for Issues of Reunification, had held 298 meetings between 1954 and 1956 to work hard to find ways to restore the political and economic conditions in the GDR.<sup>22</sup>

In short: the international and national political atmosphere was extremely tense in those months and the situation was extremely dangerous.

What consequences did this have for the GDR and its political leadership? What were the consequences?

Ulbricht?

Under such conditions, securing power takes precedence over insufficiently sophisticated experiments. This maxim results in a noticeable reluctance on the part of the leadership of the SED and the GDR towards ideas from different directions, even towards their own projects. For example, the SED leadership had developed proposals for a constitutional change in a small circle of legal experts. However, in view of the eruptive events of 1956, this project was not brought into the public debate and into the implementation phase. Under

Given the conditions, other tasks were simply more urgent. Politics is a highly sensitive art of what is feasible and possible, especially under tensions.

What was at the center of the debate about the XXth century? Party congress of the CPSU? What do you remember particularly?

Nowadays, when people talk about this party congress, it is not only in the bourgeois media that the impression is given that the most important thing was Khrushchev's statements about the personality cult and Stalin's misdeeds made on the evening of the last day of deliberations.

This ignores what was discussed and decided at this party conference, which lasted almost two weeks, namely the direction decisions for the USSR and the world socialist movement. The time of preparation was used to correct strategic mistakes in the past and to find new solutions to strengthen the movement. This particularly included moving away from Stalin's thesis that class struggle would become more intense as socialism progressed.

The party conference called for the strengthening of legality and the noticeable expansion of socialist democracy.

Since 1953, this course had become apparent with the release and rehabilitation of innocently convicted people.

For the first time, Moscow assessed that socialism could grow beyond the previous framework of one country and develop into a world socialist system. This gave rise to hope that one's own camp would be strengthened and that there would be greater momentum in the international system debate.

The long-suppressed assertion of the economic superiority of the capitalist world system became the goal

derived from expanding one's own potential in such a way that in the future the developed capitalist countries would be overtaken in terms of production per capita of the population. So people focused more on quantity than on quality and were convinced that lack and asceticism would not be the companions of social progress. In the future, socialism should also offer people more materially than previous social orders.

Finally the XXth returned. Party congress back to Lenin's thesis that nations depend on the real development conditions and the

Traditions of each country will reach socialism in different ways. As is well known, this sensible position was abandoned in the confrontation with the Yugoslav communists.

It is occasionally rumored that Ulbricht was responsible for the evaluation of the XX. Party congress in the SED slowed down rather than promoted.

The doubts discussed among some historians about Walter Ulbricht's attitude to the decisions of the XX. Party conferences are based almost exclusively on Karl Schirdewan, who wrote about it in a book in 1994

<sup>23</sup> His critical statements about Walter Ulbricht's attitude are, however, contradicted by facts. They were ignored or, perhaps due to the emerging debate about Stalinism, overlooked. Historians who, in their analyzes of the SED's politics after the

XX. In my opinion, basing the party conference on such untested individual statements is walking on very thin ice. According to Schirdewan, an evaluation of the XX. Party conference, "which was linked to independent conclusions for the SED [...] was delayed."<sup>24</sup> This is contradicted by the fact that

that just a few days after the SED delegation returned from Moscow, Walter Ulbricht commented on the results of the 20th century in a fundamental contribution to New Germany. took part in the party conference.

His distance from all party congresses held during the thirty years under Stalin became clear at the beginning of this article when he stated: "This XX. Party congress of the CPSU was the most important party congress of the CPSU since the death of Lenin.« After presenting the main results of the deliberations, Walter Ulbricht drew the first practical conclusions. At the front

His offer to the Social Democrats was for unconditional cooperation in the interest of securing peace.

He then discussed in detail the commitment of the CPSU party congress to the different paths and forms of the transition to socialism. As is well known, there had been considerable differences on this issue since 1948, as a result of which the SED had to abandon its original line of a special German path to socialism. With the decision of the XX. The party conference seemed to pave the way for a realistic and flexible approach to the design of a

free again in the socialist social order. The New Economic System and the changes in the political system of the GDR made in the 1960s are among the fundamental consequences that the SED and the GDR under Ulbricht's leadership from the XXth century. Party conference were drawn.<sup>25</sup>

There were inside and outside the party after the XXth century. Party conference heated and controversial discussions. How did Walter Ulbricht react to this?

He was also a man of clear words in these debates. Both with party members and with workers in the factories, with farmers,

He sought to exchange ideas with scientists and artists. In the discussions it became clear that he was able to listen patiently and attentively, but also persuaded people using arguments.

Due to the burden of his responsibility, he never found himself in the comfortable situation that most of his critics had then and now: They mostly polemicize from a distance from power and without the associated pressure of responsibility for tomorrow and the day after. Walter Ulbricht had to act and make decisions every day; he had to assume his position when fulfilling his statesmanship obligations

develop and elaborate.

The scientist Professor Peter Adolf Thiessen observed this very carefully and summarized what many participants in consultations with Ulbricht felt. »Walter Ulbricht reacts very sensitively and becomes extremely clear when it is unmistakable that an ornate facade is intended to cover up functional inadequacies or poor inventory. In all encounters he demands to be convinced by facts and clear logical argumentation. If he is convinced, he gives his recognition an expression that doesn't make you sit still, but rather encourages you to do so

increased performance.«<sup>26</sup>

How did Ulbricht deal with his own shortcomings?

If it proved necessary, he was ready for public self-criticism. I would like to illustrate this using a typical example from the first weeks after the XXth century. Describe the party conference. The SED Berlin district delegate conference was convened for mid-March 1956. At that time, no one in the SED leadership knew that the Western press would open with Khrushchev's secret speech on the morning of the day Ulbricht would speak there. That made him in

not an enviable situation. Should he invoke the confidentiality agreed in Moscow or – contrary to the binding agreements – speak in principle and appropriately about Stalin's criticized misconduct and crimes?

As is so often the case, Walter Ulbricht did not shy away from political or personal risks in this difficult situation. Largely extemporaneously (he still did not have an authorized text of Khrushchev's speech), he spent two thirds of his speech talking about the essential content of Khrushchev's remarks. This not agreed upon

The procedure required an explanation to the representatives of the CPSU, to whom he immediately telegraphed: "It is not convenient for us to take a public stance on CPSU issues before this has happened in Pravda. However, in this situation we had no other option. I suggest that a Pravda editorial responds to some questions."<sup>27</sup>

Ulbricht's speech, which was read in the GDR press the next day, moved the party and large parts of the population. There was a particularly critical response to one passage. »We understand that there are a large number of young comrades with us

There are those who came into the workers' movement after 1945, who did not, like us, take part in more than 45 years of party struggle and intra-party struggle, but who learned certain dogmas by heart during their party training year and now experience that the dogmas no longer fit into life. But now some people don't say that dogmatism isn't right, but rather that something in life is wrong. (hilarity) That seems

to be wrong for me."<sup>28</sup> At the 3rd meeting, which met two weeks later.

Willi Bredel particularly criticized this remark at the party conference. »If the young comrades side with Stalin

page, word for word, is this their fault and theirs alone? Isn't that our fault too?"<sup>29</sup>

Ulbricht accepted the criticism.

I know from my own experience how close this unfortunate passage affected him. There were questions about this at a youth conference in Rostock in the summer of 1956. His response, recorded in the conference minutes, reveals how deeply this issue still preoccupied him. »One of the youth friends spoke about the fact that at the Berlin delegate conference the question was that the youth in the sense of dogmatism

Literacy was influenced. I have to say that the way it was reported in the press, the report about my speech could lead to misunderstandings. And some things are a bit simplified there too. There it is said, for example, that there was hilarity at this question, and someone said that the youth were laughed at. That's not true.

Of course, some of the delegates laughed at this comparison. But that referred to this wording, which was not exact. You are right to ask this question. So how can you properly promote the study of young people and the understanding of the major political and

raise economic questions? A childhood friend asked the question, what about dogmatism?

I tell you quite frankly, of course we alone are the main culprits. Why? Because Marxism-Leninism was taught in a simplified manner during these years. But Marxism-Leninism is much richer, much more diverse, much more interesting than what is taught in schools - whether vocational or technical schools - in social lessons.<sup>30</sup> His reaction in Rostock corresponded to Ulbricht's attitude towards criticism and self-criticism.

Significant changes took place under the leadership of Walter Ulbricht

the political system of the GDR, what was the focus?

The changes in the political system of the GDR took place after the XXth century. Party congress of the CPSU and the subsequent fifth party congress of the SED in July 1958. The overall concept rested primarily on three pillars.

First: creation of a new economic system that made it possible to effectively combine the knowledge of science and technology with the needs of socialist economies. The law of value - largely ignored by Stalin - should be taken into account: the individual responsibility of companies

strengthened, the performance principle promoted and thus a - no longer primarily administrative - type of relationship between the headquarters and the economic units created.

Secondly: changing the work of the party organs by foregoing the regulation of many detailed matters and concentrating on fundamental questions of social development.

The focus was on greater involvement of members and basic organizations as well as non-party experts in the preparation of important resolutions. Experienced non-party experts (including

a. Professors such as Manfred von Ardenne, Peter A. Thiessen and Max Steenbeck) were invited; they had the right to speak there.

Third: strengthening the role of the state and the law. Particularly after the State Council was formed in September 1960, fundamental questions of social development were discussed and decided in the plenary session and in the committees of the People's Chamber, the State Council and the Council of Ministers in the following years. The local people's representatives also experienced a period of revival, the expansion of their powers and a narrow period at that time

Connecting voters and those elected. The relationships between the party

and state organs were undoubtedly among the most complicated questions in the management of social processes in the establishment of a socialist social order. Lenin recognized the problem early on and explained in his last work "Better less, but better" that a coexistence of party and state organs was not an ideal case. Lenin asked his readers the question: "Doesn't the elastic union of Soviet and party affairs constitute a source of extraordinary strength in our politics?"<sup>31</sup> Elsewhere he raised the issue

"I believe that such an association is the only guarantee of successful work."<sup>32</sup>

With those after the XX. Ulbricht was by no means reinventing the wheel. He looked to Lenin for the path to further progress. In his memoirs, Julij Kvizinsky reported on a dispute between Walter Ulbricht and a member of the CPSU party leadership. Ulbricht obviously surprised this man with the question:

»Whether the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU isn't concerned about the fact that the state can no longer be run in this way. The party will

gradually losing power. We believe," said Ulbricht to his counterpart, "that we can dictate the laws of development to society and act according to the pattern: The Politburo decides that something must be built up, abolished or banned, the rest is a question of the organizational work of the people Political party. If the decision is not fulfilled, its enforcement was poorly organized, which means someone has to be taken by the ears and punished. But we do not doubt for a moment that our decisions are right and necessary, as it were from 'God'."<sup>33</sup>

It is clear from Kvizinsky's remarks that Ulbricht had very clearly recognized that the monopolization of all essential decisions in the party's leadership bodies for the development of society posed a serious problem for the further development of socialist society. As chairman of the State Council of the GDR, which was formed in 1960, Ulbricht had a particular influence on its tasks and working methods. What do you think about that?

The State Council was formed on September 12, 1960 as an organ of the People's Chamber. To Parliament he was

also accountable. The programmatic declaration of its chairman on October 4, 1960 made it clear that a new quality of government work was being sought.

This was about a fundamental change in the political system. Ulbricht's credo was: "Under our conditions, state leadership is not the exercise of command power, but rather the leadership of the people on the path of conscious struggle for the victory of socialism."<sup>34</sup> Before the People's Chamber he noted critically that it was not uncommon for citizens

»with soulless bureaucracy

"Behavior" is encountered. »There is too much commanding, rejection, talking over others, being bossy, patronizing. A lot of sympathy, good suggestions and honest willingness are lost when you treat people like that, when you hurt their feelings and offend them.«<sup>35</sup>

"Convincing people," is his attitude, "is a difficult but beautiful and rewarding task; it requires a lot of time and effort, a lot of tact, tact and human size."<sup>36</sup>

Among the first areas to be addressed

the State Council adopted after the Programmatic Declaration, the administration of justice in the GDR belonged.

Yes. In January 1961 and May 1962, the State Council critically analyzed the situation and condemned the dogmatic views that were particularly evident in criminal law. A commission was appointed and commissioned to develop measures to perfect the socialist administration of justice. In December 1964 the result was available in the form of a decree and fundamental legal changes. These were discussed and drafted for public discussion over a year

placed.

Never before and never again has there been such comprehensive advice on the law and its popular application. More than two million citizens of the GDR took part in the deliberations and provided numerous suggestions and suggestions. Around 600 of these suggestions were taken into account in the final version of the judicial decree.

After this truly democratic preparation, the State Council submitted the drafts for a new court constitution law, a public prosecutor's law and a law amending procedural law

Provisions for the People's Chamber for consultation, examination and decision-making. The popular course of the socialist administration of justice was effectively further strengthened by decisions of the State Council on the formation and activity of conflict commissions (in companies and institutions with more than 50 employees) and arbitration commissions (in cities and municipalities). The conflict commissions decided on minor crimes if the guilt was low and the facts were clear and simple.<sup>37</sup> They did it in a similar way

1961 to the new regulation and expansion of the rights and responsibilities of the local people's representatives, if I see that correctly.

Walter Ulbricht had dealt with the matter in detail, especially on site with representatives and mayors in several districts. During consultations in the Forst district, his main concern was defining clear competencies. "One of the essential problems in further qualifying state leadership," he said, "is determining and maintaining clear responsibilities for individuals

bodies and their employees. In practice, the responsibility of state bodies is reduced today by making several bodies or employees responsible for the same thing, without making it clear who is responsible for what.

He commented critically: "The fact that detailed questions were decided centrally, that party organs took over and decided individual problems of state management activity, reflected insufficient consideration of realities, unfounded impatience and a lack of trust in the willingness and ability of those responsible

state organs, their employees and the working people to solve these tasks."<sup>38</sup> A commission of the State Council then developed drafts with practitioners from municipalities, cities, districts, districts and ministries as well as with scientists

"Regulations on the tasks and functioning of the local people's representatives." The State Council discussed the materials and made them available for public discussion for months.

Walter Ulbricht was responsible for expanding the powers and responsibilities of the elected representatives from the municipal councils to the People's Chamber

obviously an important concern in the development of socialist democracy?

That was obvious. The intensification of the activities of the people's representatives was one of the political conclusions that emerged from the evaluation of the decisions of the XXth century. Party congress of the CPSU were drawn. As early as January

1957, the People's Chamber discussed and passed laws on the local organs of state power and on the rights and duties of the People's Chamber towards the local people's representatives.

The course taken was especially after the formation of the

Council of State in 1960. Striking examples of this were, in particular, the expansion of the rights and responsibilities of local representative bodies, the activation of the activities of the committees of the People's Chamber, and the expansion of the administration of justice. As with the new economic system, new territory was often broken. The results of this development finally found their way into the constitution passed by referendum in 1968.

In this context, it is also worth mentioning what was done during this time to further develop the GDR's electoral system. From 1963

The management of elections, which had previously traditionally been the responsibility of the Ministry of the Interior, was entrusted to democratically elected election commissions at all levels - from the People's Chamber election to the election of local councils. In the interest of a closer relationship between voters and those elected, the constituencies were gradually reduced in size. From 1965 onwards, the principle of a uniform list of parties and mass organizations united in the National Front was expanded in such a way that voters at all levels were given more candidates to choose from than there were mandates to be awarded.

The use of electronic computing technology in determining and transmitting election results made it possible from 1967 onwards to announce the provisional election results on election evening - as in other industrialized countries.

The first half of the 1960s proved to be a period of unmistakable and internationally recognized social progress in the GDR. With the comprehensive discussion in 1967 and 1968 about the draft constitution drawn up under Ulbricht's leadership and with the referendum on this constitution on April 6, 1968

A high point was reached in the development of socialist democracy in the GDR.

In more than 750,000 events during the six-month public discussion, the population examined the draft constitution and expressed their opinion and approval of this fundamental document. 12,454 proposals were submitted to the commission for drafting the constitution of the GDR. They were seriously discussed in the Constitutional Commission and led to 118 changes to the original draft, affecting 55 articles of the Constitution

Constitution related.

For the first time in Germany a constitution bore the handwriting of the people. The letter and spirit of the Constitution were the result of their will and their civic commitment. The changes made to the constitution and other elements of the GDR's political system in the 1970s later led to a growing difference between the constitutional text and constitutional reality and to a reduction in the opportunity and willingness to participate in solving social and state tasks.

You were a member of the strategic working group that was formed in the SED Politburo in the 1960s on Ulbricht's initiative. Who was in there, what was their function?

In my time it no longer existed.

The "Strategic Working Group for Planning the Party's Strategy in the Areas of Politics, Science and Culture" was created in 1966. In addition to 15 members of the Politburo, it included around 50 people from all areas of social life - including 15 university and college professors. One of the first tasks of this committee was thorough

Discussion of essential development problems in the GDR in preparation for the VIIth Party Congress of the SED, which was to take place in April 1967. This discussion took place in working groups.

Ulbricht demanded that problems and solutions be discussed openly and ruthlessly, and declared firmly: "We need the participation of scientists and experts in the working groups who, based on the real facts in their field, clearly and unambiguously present their point of view, regardless of whether this point of view the heads of this or that state body, if necessary

belong to the same working group, like it or not.<sup>39</sup> In the event that no agreement could be reached in the working groups, he called for the different variants to be assigned to the plenary session for discussion.

This approach reflected Walter Ulbricht's working style in carrying out his duties at the head of the party and as chairman of the State Council.

In the first half of 1971, the strategic working group was dissolved without replacement. This was part of the changed strategy that was decided at the Seventh Party Congress of the SED. Causes and

The background to this change is interpreted differently by those involved and historians. My memories point to this: In Moscow, with the change from Khrushchev to Brezhnev in October 1964, the tide had obviously changed. The earlier view that system changes would be too risky and that the existing system should therefore be retained became more important again. Moscow increasingly pushed for the political structures of all socialist countries to be identical to those of the political and economic system of the USSR. Lenin's conception of



different national paths and methods in building socialism that the XX. which the party congress had once again postulated, was cast into doubt and practically revised.  
In this way, the essence of the stagnation that had spread during the Brezhnev era was transmitted to the other states of the CMEA. Wrong decisions by the national leaderships of the socialist countries in Europe increased the clearly growing deficits in social development. The opponents of socialism recognized their opportunity and used it with all the rigor and all they had at their disposal

political, media and military means. Treason was most likely also involved. We remember the bitter end!

See WI Lenin: Better less, but better, Moscow 1947, p. 1007

See Herbert Graf: My life. My boss Ulbricht. My view of things, Berlin 2008, and this: Interests and intrigues. Who divided Germany, Berlin 2011

Document No. 158 "Protocol of the Berlin Conference of the Three Great Powers", in: The Potsdam (Berlin) Conference of the Highest Representatives of the Three Allied Powers - USSR, USA and Great Britain - Document Collection, Progress Verlag Moscow/State Publishing House of the GDR 1986, p. 285

See letter from Rudolf Herrnstadt to W.

S. Semyonov from November 28, 1962, in:

Rudolf Herrnstadt: The Politburo of the SED and the history of June 17, 1953, edited by Nadja Stulz-Herrnstadt, Reinbek near Hamburg 1990, p. 264ff.

See letter from members of the Politburo of the SED Central Committee to LI Brezhnev dated January 21, 1971, SAPMO-BArch DY 30/2119, pp. 65-98

See Wolfgang Leonhard and Mario Frank in the MDR contribution "Historical Saxon Personalities" from November 26, 2006 Sebastian Haffner: Ulbricht. An essay", in: concrete, magazine for politics and culture, Hamburg, September 1966

Gerhard Zwerenz, quoted in: Sebastian Haffner: Ulbricht. An essay, op. cit.

Wolfgang Leonhard: My story

GDR, Berlin 2007, p. 59

See »On the Stalinism debate. 50 years

after the XX., Party Congress of the CPSU", Statement by the Historical Commission at the Left Party/PDS Executive Board dated 7.

February 2006

Fritz Stern: Five Germanys and one life, Munich 2009, p. 225

Julij A. Kwizinskij: Before the storm. Memories of a Diplomat, Berlin 1993.

p. 165

Central Archives of the FSB No. 33543, Volume 1,

Sheets 200-202

Georgi Dimitroff: Diaries 1933-1945,

Berlin 2000, p. 249

See Mario Frank: Walter Ulbricht, a German biography, Berlin 2001, p. 137; Herbert Wehner: Personal notes 1929-1942, Cologne 1982, p. 189

"Everything upside down," in: Der Spiegel 29/1953 from June 15, 1953. In the article

Several conversations between Semyonov and Kastner are reported, which were about changing the politics and composition of the GDR government. It also claims that Semyonov arranged for Kastner to have an "informal three-day meeting with Stalin" in Crimea in the summer of 1952.

SAPMO BArch NY 4036/736

"70 years of fighting for peace and the well-being of the people, theses of the SED Central Committee on the 70th anniversary of the KPD", resolution of the 6th meeting of the SED Central Committee on 9/10. June 1988, Berlin 1988, p. 49f.

See Werner Eberlein: Born on November 9th. Memories, Berlin 2000

Werner Eberlein: My life was a roller coaster, in: Neues Deutschland from 2/3. September 2000, p. 19

See Markus Wolf: Spy chief in

secret cold war, Düsseldorf and Munich 1997, p. 118

See Second Activity Report of the Research Advisory Board for Reunification Issues. Published by the Federal Ministry for All-German Issues, Bonn 1957

Karl Schirdewan: Uprising against Ulbricht, Berlin 1994. Karl Schirdewan (1907-1998), 1925 KPD, 1931 publishing director of the "Young Guard", sentenced to three years in prison in 1934, then Sachsenhausen and Flossenbürg concentration camps until 1945. After the war worked on the party executive board, 1949 head of the Western Commission, 1953 member of the Politburo, from 1955 to 1958 Central Committee Secretary, responsible for cadre issues and member of the Security Commission (1954-1957). In February 1958, together with Stasi Minister Ernst Wollweber, he was removed from the Politburo and the Central Committee because of factional activity

SED excluded. From 1958 to 1965 head of the Potsdam State Archives Administration.

Schirdewan was rehabilitated by the PDS in 1990 as a victim of Stalinist persecution and accepted into the party's council of elders.  
loc. cit., p. 81

For the reality of claims in Schirdewan's writing "Uprising against Ulbricht" see: Herbert Graf: My Life. My boss Ulbricht. My view of things, Berlin 2008,  
pp. 329-335

PA Thiessen: Encounters with Walter Ulbricht", Berlin-Weimar 1968, p. 331f.

Telegram from Walter Ulbricht to the Presidium of the Central Committee of the CPSU dated March 19, 1956; SAPMO-BArch, DY 30J IV2/202/315

Walter Ulbricht: Answer to questions from the Berlin District Delegates Conference of the SED, In: Neues Deutschland from March 18, 1956, p. 3

Minutes of the 3rd party conference of the SED,  
March 24th to 30th, 1956, article by Willi Bredel, p.  
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Contribution by Ulbricht: Federal Archives Berlin (BA) DC 20/3798 p. 34

WI Lenin: Better less, but better, a.

a. O., p. 1011f.

loc. cit., p. 1013

Published in: Julij A. Kwizinskij: Before the Storm. Memories of a Diplomat, Berlin 1993 p. 176

Walter Ulbricht: Programmatic statement by the Chairman of the State Council to the People's Chamber of the GDR on October 4, 1960, in: Series of publications by the State Council of the GDR No. 2/1960, p. 38

loc. cit., p. 57

loc. cit., p. 58

See Hans Joachim Semler/Herbert Kern: Administration of Justice - Matter of the entire people, Berlin 1963, pp. 125 and 119-148

Walter Ulbricht, statement to the Forest District Council on February 25, 1961, BA Berlin DA 5/7871, page 8

SAPMO-BArch NY 30/3306, page 57

Alfred Kosing

The most important statesman in the GDR

Alfred Kosing, born in 1928, trained bricklayer, joined the SED in 1946. Studied history and philosophy in Halle and Berlin, received his doctorate in 1960 ("On the Essence of Marxist-Leninist Epistemology") and habilitation in 1964 ("The Theory of the Nation and the national question in Germany"). From 1951 to 1964 lecturer and professor at the Institute for

Social sciences at the Central Committee of the SED, 1964 professor at the Karl Marx University Leipzig, from 1969 to 1971 head of department at the Institute for Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the SED, then - until 1990 - head of the department for dialectical materialism at the Institute for Marxist-Leninist Philosophy. Kosing lives in Turkey and works as a journalist.

My memories of Walter Ulbricht cover the period from 1946 until his death; They are partly direct, partly indirect and sometimes quite contradictory in their content.

This is due to various reasons, such as the development of my own political and theoretical experiences and knowledge, changed historical circumstances, but also significant changes in the views and work of Walter Ulbricht himself over time. Since a personality and his work can only be understood in the context of history, in my memories the person of Walter Ulbricht is so inextricably interwoven with the circumstances of the time and his work that it is hardly possible for me to create a memory image independent of these historical ones

to give conditions.

On April 1, 1944, at the age of 15, I left school and was called up for military service as a naval helper and, as a result of the events of the war, I quickly found myself involved in direct combat operations at the front. I still believed that I had to defend the fatherland until I gradually realized that this war was a war was a senseless and criminal undertaking that had to end in catastrophe for us.

Fortunately, I survived and managed to desert in April 1945 and disappear into civilian life.

Depressed and disoriented, I tried to understand what the causes were

this disastrous development and how we in Germany can get out of this misery. Since continuing my school education was out of the question, I decided to start an apprenticeship as a bricklayer

In any case, the destroyed cities would have to be rebuilt sooner or later.

In my construction company, I was elected to this body during the first works council election and so, willy-nilly, I found myself in the field of political activity.

As a result of years of fascist propaganda - even at school - I was full of prejudices and numerous relics of the constant

While the influence was still alive, I quickly found myself involved in political discussions and arguments with older trade unionists and also members of the KPD and the SPD. I had to realize how little I knew about German history and, above all, that I had no knowledge of the history of the workers' movement and its fight against fascism.

In the course of these discussions I came across the name Walter Ulbricht for the first time and learned that he was one of the most important officials of the KPD, who also wrote a book ("The Legend of German Socialism").

had written. From this book I learned what so-called National Socialism really was, what the main causes and social foundations of its emergence were, and what reactionary, nationalist and racist ideology and goals it represented.

Walter Ulbricht convincingly exposed the demagoguery of fascism and demonstrated that there could be no question of socialism at all.

From the conversations and discussions with my work colleagues, I gained my first knowledge of the history of the German workers' movement. If she still

were very modest, I soon understood that the reconstruction of a new, peaceful Germany could only succeed if the workers' movement, which had previously been divided into the KPD and SPD, was reunited and if they shaped society together with all democratic forces. My place for political work could therefore only be the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, which emerged from the union of the KPD and SPD, which I joined after its founding and was a member of until the end of the GDR. In a certain sense, Walter Ulbricht was a constant companion of my conscious mind

life, because his political work as general secretary or first secretary of the party had a very significant influence on it.

Now I began intensively studying Marxism and became an active supporter of the ideals of socialism. I didn't always agree with Walter Ulbricht and therefore had to deal with some conflicts and arguments.

The indirect acquaintance with Walter Ulbricht came about after my studies and the beginning of my work at the Institute for Social Sciences at the ZK, which was founded in Berlin in 1951

the SED also to a direct one. Although he did not attend the official opening of the institute due to other commitments, he expressed his keen interest in the work and development of this institution by visiting it several times and meeting with the staff. In the meantime I had gotten to know various members of the party leadership, including the two chairmen Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, as well as Fred Oelßner, Paul Wandel and Kurt Hager. Each of them had their own special character, language, attitude and impact.

What impact did Walter Ulbricht have on the

first encounter with me, the young, still inexperienced aspiring scientist?

That was over 60 years ago now, and what remains in my memory is that, firstly, he seemed very normal and talked to us as if we were equals, without in any way letting on that the party leader was above us. Secondly, that his immense political experience and theoretical knowledge became clear in discussions about our tasks in the institute as well as current issues, and thirdly, that he was not an excellent speaker like Otto Grotewohl, who had his own style.

But his often completely free speeches, which I heard over time, were always very clear in content, well argued and logically rigorous, and that was ultimately more important than the dialect-colored pronunciation.

Personally, I have had direct contact with Ulbricht several times over the years, for various reasons.

One was related to his interest in the book "Space - Earth - Man", which was written in the early 1960s by a large number of scientists specifically for the participants in the youth consecration, who called it

received a gift. The youth consecration was an old tradition of the German workers' movement, which Walter Ulbricht also knew from his social democratic youth. He was therefore interested in the manuscript of the book and made suggestions for its improvement because he found that the very good individual contributions followed one another in too isolated a manner, without bringing together the findings and results of the various sciences into a philosophically generalized worldview. He commissioned Kurt Hager<sup>1</sup> to find an author for such an introductory chapter, to the book, so to speak

to round off. Hager called me into his office, explained Ulbricht's idea to me and asked me to write this chapter as quickly as possible. After a week I delivered the manuscript, and a few days later I was supposed to come back to him.

Hager gave me my manuscript, which had numerous handwritten comments, and said that Walter Ulbricht liked it but still had a few suggestions. I should look at his notes on the manuscript and then think about what else I could take into account.

When revising and finalizing the text, I was able to use some of Ulbricht's suggestions.

In any case, I found it remarkable that the First Secretary of the Central Committee dealt with such a book and also made useful suggestions.

Another opportunity for a personal meeting arose on his 70th birthday in 1963. Since we at the Institute of Social Sciences knew that Ulbricht had recently been very concerned with the question of what role the scientific and technical revolution would play in the

further construction of socialist society must play and what consequences this has for both the theoretical understanding of socialism and the practical one

Politics in the GDR, we came up with the idea of writing a scientific paper on this topic under the title "Socialism - Science - Productive Power" examined some philosophical, economic and social problems of this large complex. The three editors responsible for the book – Otto Reinhold, Günter Heyden and I – visited the jubilarian on his birthday and presented him with the work.

Otherwise, my memories of Walter Ulbricht relate primarily to how I viewed his work as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the

SED personally experienced the impact the views presented in speeches and publications and the corresponding orientations, tasks and assessments of the GDR's development status had on my thoughts and actions. These did not always meet with uncritical approval, and there were periods in which - despite all the recognition of his achievements - I considered it appropriate to strongly criticize his assessment of some events and decisions on a number of issues.

As my experience and knowledge grew, I began to

To critically question opinions and decisions and to pay more attention to their practical effects, and this sometimes gave rise to significant conflicts with consequences for me. When I remember such situations and arguments from the perspective of an 85-year-old today, I have to admit that some of my criticism, which was justified in principle, was one-sided and therefore exaggerated insofar as it reflected the objective conditions of our politics as a whole at the time, especially but the respective concrete situation and Walter Ulbricht's possible scope for action

insufficiently taken into account in its function. Only later did I realize that in order to objectively assess his attitude and his work, it is important to take into account not only these objective conditions, but also his political career, the determining influences and experiences in his many years of activity and other subjective moments.

Like most Communist Party officials, Walter Ulbricht came from the Social Democratic Party, in which he was already actively involved. What it meant for a young revolutionary socialist that this party August

Bebels simply betrayed all of his principles and decisions with flimsy justifications in August 1914, took the side of the imperialist warmongers and took part in their war of conquest as an alleged defense of the fatherland, can hardly be understood today. And when the leadership of the Social Democrats in the revolutionary crisis of 1918, in which there would have been the possibility of continuing the November Revolution into a socialist revolution, decided to use the political power they had acquired to...

To save the capitalist social system instead of fighting for the goal of socialist society that had been proclaimed for decades, this party's betrayal of the ideals of socialism was complete.

The only option left to the revolutionary socialist forces of social democracy was to separate from this party and organize themselves independently in the Communist Party. But today we can imagine what that meant for the relationship between the members and officials of these two parties, who had worked in a common party for so long and now, despite each other

many similarities on crucial issues, had to be seen as opponents? How much disappointment, bitterness and sometimes even hatred must have arisen from those who felt betrayed and cheated?

And how did the "traitors to socialism" in the leadership of a party that called itself socialist react to this situation? Did her guilty conscience not drive her to do so often enough?

To suspect, belittle and discriminate against "apostates"? They didn't have to, in order to save face with the masses of Social Democratic members, in words

continue to advocate for socialism and thereby deceive and deceive their own members? Why did they create one?

"Socialization Commission" and announced that "socialization is marching" while at the same time doing everything to preserve capitalism?

What did a very young socialist know about this in 1946? And how could he understand why Stalin, who began to play a larger role in the Communist International from 1925, came to the view that social democracy was the main enemy of the Communist Party and later

even the absurd thesis of

represented "social fascism" and defamed social democracy as a kind of twin brother of fascism?

It was and is not difficult to understand that, given the behavior of that party, German communists who came from the Social Democratic Party could be prone to more or less accepting and temporarily following these false and politically harmful views. This story should not be forgotten if one wants to judge what it was like for communist officials like Wilhelm Pieck, Franz Dähle,

Anton Ackermann, Hermann Matern and of course also for Walter Ulbricht 1945 meant paving the necessary path for trusting cooperation between communists and social democrats, enabling rapprochement and achieving unification into a unified socialist

party. This required critical and self-critical examination and overcoming of one's own mistakes and the willingness to give up prejudices and one-sided assessments and also to seek an understanding about past history. This was due to the experience of

Fascism and the liberation of Germany created favorable conditions that both sides had to take advantage of.

Ulbricht undoubtedly played a decisive role in making it possible to seize this opportunity and, together with numerous social democratic officials who had learned the right lessons from history, such as Otto Grotewohl, Otto Buchwitz, Max Fechner and Erich Mückenberger, to lay the foundation for the SED.

I was able to carry out this complicated process with great success in 1945/46 in the small district of Blankenburg/Harz

Attention and also in contact and discussion with officials of both parties. I got to know many aspects of different views from the earlier history of the parties and gained a very vivid impression of the great enthusiasm that had gripped many people, of the honest effort to eradicate the mistakes of the past, but also of some of the difficulties of communication, because, understandably, there were still ideological and psychological relics of earlier history.

So I was able to get a rough idea of what was going on

from the higher levels up to the leadership of both parties in the discussions about unification and about the formulation of the "principles and goals of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany".

Ulbricht was elected to the leadership at the founding party conference of the SED, and this was obviously, on the one hand, recognition of his enormous contribution to this unification work and, on the other hand, an expression of the expectation that he would have a decisive influence on the party's policies.

When I talk about this period today

As I reflect on our history, I see Walter Ulbricht's work and achievements more clearly than in the past, as my judgments were often too dependent on a particular situation.

In our overall very difficult history, there were some periods and events of very particular importance, be it that very critical situations had arisen, such as in 1953 and 1956, or that a turning point had been reached at which fundamental decisions and decisions were necessary, such as in 1962/ 63. These were times when I tried particularly hard to achieve this

To theoretically question the party's policies and the corresponding decisions of the leadership, not to simply accept them, but to understand their reasons, and to check whether they were really in harmony with the principles and findings of Marxism and the existing experiences.

Since Walter Ulbricht, as First Secretary of the Central Committee, officially represented the party's political line, this meant that I dealt primarily with his speeches, his publications and evaluations and often also discussed them critically, sometimes not only in difficulties of understanding,

but also got into conflicts.

In October 1952 in Moscow the...

XIX. Party congress of the CPSU met, the first party congress after 1939 and the last under Stalin. At the 2nd party conference in July 1952, the leadership of the SED decided to begin building the foundations of socialism in the GDR after the previous economic, social and political developments had created the conditions for entering the transition period to socialism.

Of course, it was clear that such a decision could not be made without the consent of the leadership of the CPSU, and that means

Stalin's, too, could be done because the GDR was far from being a sovereign state; there were still the Soviet Control Commission and the High Commissioner for Germany, bodies that had superior decision-making authority. As we now know from the relevant documents, Stalin was interested in the development of a socialist GDR for a long time because he continued to stick to the option that the Allies had decided on in Potsdam in 1945. After that, Germany should be completely demilitarized and then emerge as a unified, peaceful and democratic state

develop in which all foundations and remnants of fascism were eliminated and its membership in military alliances was excluded. But this common commitment by the Allies was effectively abolished by Churchill with his anti-Soviet incendiary speech in Fulton in February 1946, in which he called on the USA to begin, together with the other imperialist states, a policy of containment against the Soviet Union and its influence in Europe. He became the initiator of the Cold War and planned from the outset to destroy Germany's western occupation zones with her

to include economic and later military potential in this new anti-Soviet coalition.

From this point on, Soviet foreign policy under Stalin was primarily aimed at enforcing the peace order agreed upon in Potsdam, and their security interests understandably came first. Although the Cold War, inspired by Churchill and organized by American President Truman, was already fully underway and through the introduction of a separate currency in the western zones and the establishment of a separate West German state

When the division of Germany had actually been completed, Stalin tried to the end to stop this process and therefore, in the note of March 1952, suggested to both the Western powers and the government of the Federal Republic of Germany that the European peace order should be anchored in a formal peace treaty and that Germany would be united through all-German unity to restore free elections.

This proposal was rejected by the Western powers and particularly vehemently by Adenauer, although it undoubtedly gave the chance for the restoration of a unified German state on a capitalist basis

basis was connected. So it finally became clear that the Western powers, with the West German state now integrated into their Cold War, were not willing to comply with the Potsdam resolutions and implement them, that instead of the agreed peace order they were confronting the Cold War with the danger of a military conflict emerging declared the basic line of their policy.

This had significant consequences not only for international relations, but also for developments in Germany. After rejecting Stalin's proposals

After the peace treaty, the question of how the GDR's further development should proceed was also on the agenda, because a state of limbo between capitalism and socialism, as had developed in recent years, was not possible indefinitely. The point had now been reached at which a decision on the further economic, social and political development of the GDR was necessary.

The question of whether this step was suggested by the SED leadership or came from the Moscow leadership was not clear to me at the time, and I know

not today either. But I suspect that the initiative came from Walter Ulbricht, who in the leadership of the SED was always the most intensively concerned with all aspects of this complex problem.

In my opinion, his statements at the 2nd party conference of the SED were thoroughly justified and convincing, and the policy of transition to building the foundations of socialism that was subsequently initiated was initially relatively calm overall, especially since it was also possible to gain the support of the decisive ones To win over the forces of the other parties in the GDR.

However, a noticeable change occurred after the IX. Party congress of the CPSU, and this led to a significant deterioration in the living conditions of many sections of the population. There was a strong concentration of economic and financial resources on the accelerated development of heavy industry, which had to lead to the impairment of light industry and agriculture, which were important for the supply of consumer goods and food. The attempt to address the resulting bottlenecks through restrictive measures

Overcoming population strata was bound to fail and, as a consequence, led to increasing dissatisfaction. This in turn formed a favorable ground for the actions actively pursued by Western secret services and other organizations aimed at destabilizing the GDR and creating conditions for a political overthrow, or, as the government of the Federal Republic of Germany put it: the "Soviet to liberate the zone."

In the first half of 1953, this negative development became increasingly critical

situation. At that time I could not understand the question of the causes of the decisions that led to such negative consequences, much less the passive attitude of the leadership.

When a communiqué from the SED Politburo was published in New Germany on June 9, 1953, which announced in dry terms that the party leadership had recently made serious mistakes that were now being corrected, it not only led to strong irritation within the party, but probably also gave the organizers of demonstrations and riots

the signal to start. This is how the events of June 17, 1953 came about, the character of which has been widely discussed ever since - from a popular uprising to a fascist coup, both of which, in my opinion, are unfounded.

The party leadership was clearly unprepared for the events and was not only surprised by them, but also proved largely incapable of taking action. It was completely incomprehensible to me at the time and I was of the opinion that she had failed in this threatening situation.

There is a discussion of this question

But it never came within the party, and the disputes that took place in the leadership about it were never made public. That's why I couldn't get an idea of what attitude Walter Ulbricht had in those days and what role he played in it. However, the fact that at the next meeting of the Central Committee the Minister for State Security Wilhelm Zaisser and the editor-in-chief of Neue Deutschland Rudolf Herrnstadt were excluded from the Politburo as well as other officials from the Central Committee showed that there were major disputes

had to. However, many of the background facts remained unknown and only came to light after the end of the GDR. Only then did previously incomprehensible processes and Ulbricht's attitude at the time become more understandable to me.

While Stalin and the Soviet leadership had long feared that the imperialist powers, led by the USA, were preparing a military attack on the Soviet Union, Stalin probably concluded after rejecting his proposal to conclude a peace treaty that an attack would take place in the near future time can be expected. That's why at the IX. Party conference

the CPSU's entire policy was geared towards preparing for defense. Corresponding demands were also made on the allied countries of the nascent socialist community of states, which were consequently forced to subordinate their economic policies to this goal. This led to great difficulties in the GDR at the end of 1952 and beginning of 1953, which resulted in internal political destabilization.

In addition, Stalin had died at the beginning of March 1953 and there was a bitter power struggle in the Politburo of the CPSU

between rival groups. It seemed that Beria initially had the best chance of succeeding Stalin. Apart from the fact that he probably had Stalin's greatest trust, as he had been the executor of all of Stalin's illegal and criminal orders since 1938, and often also their initiator, as Interior Minister he also had real power in the form of the Interior Ministry's troops.

In the first period after Stalin's death, Beria probably had to play a decisive role together with Malenkov, who was then head of government

Politburo played, because he managed to push through the decision that the construction of socialism in the GDR should be ended immediately and a policy of reunification should be pursued. Apparently he was willing to sacrifice the GDR in order to possibly avert the danger of military attack from the imperialist powers.

Walter Ulbricht, Fred Oelßner and Otto Grotewohl were ordered to Moscow at the beginning of June 1953 and forced to agree to this solution and to immediately send corresponding instructions by telegram to Hermann Axen in Berlin, who was in charge of the Central Committee Secretariat in Ulbricht's absence

directed.

Against the background of these events, it becomes understandable what situation the SED leadership found itself in at the time, why there was no unified opinion within it and why it was largely unable to act.

Meanwhile, in the power struggle within the Politburo of the CPSU, a decision was made that changed the situation again. Beria had been removed from power and arrested and Khrushchev had been elected First Secretary of the Central Committee. The decision about the GDR was repealed, and so the line decided at the 2nd party conference of the SED, with the

to begin building the foundations of socialism. At the subsequent meeting of the SED Central Committee, General Secretary Walter Ulbricht was elected First Secretary. In his speech, he justified the "New Course" policy, which envisaged a correction of the measures that had apparently been taken under Soviet pressure and, in addition, numerous constructive steps that led to the normalization of the situation.

Even if the background to the critical events could not be discussed publicly - which was impossible given the situation in the Soviet leadership - it was

showed Walter Ulbricht's constructive suggestions, which were then also presented on the

IV party conference in spring 1954 confirmed that in this extremely difficult situation he proved to be the most capable and strongest politician in the leadership of the SED. Also because he was able to draw the necessary consequences from the mistakes he made. Even if I was not satisfied at the time that the causes of the temporary negative development were ignored, I considered the path taken with the "New Course" to be the right one, and my attitude towards Walter Ulbricht was first and foremost

determined by this - and not by the criticism of the lack of information. Given the knowledge we have today about the events, it is of course clear to me why it would have been of little use back then to have an extensive public discussion of the causes.

Another critical phase in the development of the GDR occurred in 1956 after the XXth century. Party congress of the CPSU. After Beria's disempowerment and arrest, it was Khrushchev who, in the style of Stalin's terror trials, was held in one trial "Agent of imperialism" was convicted and shot – succeeded,

to consolidate his position of power, even if it was soon seriously threatened again by a majority in the Politburo led by Molotov, Kaganovich and Malenkov.

These three were once among Stalin's closest associates and were also heavily involved in his illegal and criminal actions. Because they feared that their complicity would be discovered, they had already decided with their majority in the Politburo to replace Khrushchev. But the Central Committee, which was hastily assembled by the latter

prevented this intention, and now this group in turn became one

"Anti-party faction" excluded.

But Khrushchev still encountered great resistance in official circles with his policy of cautious de-Stalinization, because the release of many innocently convicted people, the rehabilitation of excluded and convicted party and state officials, the dissolution of prison camps and other measures led to more and more public discussions, including in the Population.

Therefore, he felt compelled to make a major liberation move in order to achieve this

To break the resistance of the orthodox Stalinist forces in the party, the state and society. This was done in the "Secret Speech" given by him in a closed session of the XX. Party conference was held.

In it, completely surprising to everyone, he revealed in a poorly thought-out manner the numerous arbitrary acts, terror campaigns and criminal actions of Stalin and his accomplices Yagoda, Yezhov and Beria. He explained that these were only possible because Stalin had acquired absolute dictatorial power over time and made all the important decisions

high-handed, whereby the elected bodies such as the Central Committee and also the Politburo and its members were reduced to mere executive bodies.

Khrushchev described this unbearable situation, which had led to serious consequences for the party, the state and socialist society, as

"Personality cult", which he strongly condemned as un-Marxist and held responsible for these degeneration phenomena.

The delegates to the party congress and also the delegations of foreign parties who took part in the conference,

including a delegation from the SED with Walter Ulbricht, were literally shocked by the force and severity of these accusations and had to struggle for composure. No discussion took place and the full text of Khrushchev's speech was not published.

The SED party organizations later informed about this by simply summarizing the content. In the Institute for Social Sciences at the Central Committee of the SED, the teaching staff was informed by the director Lene Berg, but she reported on Stalin's arbitrary acts and crimes

in a very superficial and often apologetic and euphemistic way. You could see how shocked and perplexed she was by these brutal revelations. There was no discussion, but I had a private conversation with her afterwards in which I criticized her actions and accused her of treating us like little children who had to be kept from unpleasant and stressful things. This is not only unnecessary, but also harmful, since we would find out the truth sooner or later anyway.

This opportunity arose after a while, because in the West

Khrushchev's speech was published very soon in the press. The text was probably transmitted from Poland and reached the media this way. So I was soon able to read a German and an English translation of the speech and came to the conclusion that the text was authentic - contrary to the version that had been circulating here for a long time that it was an "imperialist forgery".

Khrushchev's speech was indeed disturbing, although I was no longer completely unprepared, as in various Soviet publications I very much

followed closely, de-Stalinization was already on the horizon. In the theses "Fifty Years of the CPSU" from the fall of 1953, I noticed a certain distancing from Stalin and the personality cult surrounding him.

But the extent of the crimes committed by Stalin and his aides was truly horrifying and immediately raised the question of whether all of this could be explained solely by Stalin's negative character traits and the cult surrounding him. Such an explanation leads - as I thought - directly to an idealistic view of history that was incompatible with Marxism.

On what social basis and

Structures and by means of which functional mechanisms of the party and the state could such deformations and degeneration occur in a socialist society?

The denunciation and condemnation of the criminal acts of a single leader could not replace a historical-materialistic analysis of the objective social, political and ideological conditions on the basis of which such excesses became possible, quite apart from the fact that a large number were always required to carry out all the criminal acts from

participants and executive apparatus was required.

I therefore saw in Khrushchev's speech and the theory of the cult of personality, on the one hand, an attempt to distance oneself from Stalin and the Stalinist system to a certain extent, but at the same time also as an extensive justification and trivialization, with which I absolutely could not agree.

Even though I was pretty much alone in my opinion at the institute, there were passionate discussions about these problems and many opinions within the party and especially among intellectuals

went in the same direction.

My stance was reinforced by an interview with Palmiro Togliatti, who very emphatically called on the Soviet leadership to analyze the objective social and political foundations of these degenerations of socialism in the spirit of a Marxist approach and to draw the necessary conclusions from them.

Since the text of Khrushchev's speech was not published, the CPSU Central Committee issued a resolution "On the Cult of Personality and its Consequences" in which - without giving any details - in principle the basic opinion of the

The presentation was repeated and the entire responsibility was shifted to Stalin. The SED Central Committee then also took a stand by adopting the position of the CPSU and also declaring that a discussion of errors was inappropriate because "errors in moving forward" had to be overcome.



Since considerable unrest had arisen in the party, Walter Ulbricht commented on some questions in a speech, but in doing so aggravated the situation even further. Because he also tried to downplay the extent of the problems and committed the awkwardness of calling the "young

"To teach comrades who had considered Stalin a classic of Marxism-Leninism" that they were wrong and that they had to change their opinion.

I cannot hide the fact that I was outraged by this callous manner and asked the question who taught the young comrades that Stalin was a "classic"? I wasn't the only one who thought it was impossible to get out of the affair in such a way, and that's why there were quite strong protests.

These had their effect, because Walter Ulbricht wrote this passage in his speech, which is in the new

Germany had stood for a book publication and thus corrected itself. I didn't believe that such a faux pas could easily be forgiven for such an experienced politician, but I later understood that it most likely arose from a great deal of uncertainty and also a certain amount of helplessness as to how to deal with the precarious situation.

Because it was not only an internal matter for the communist and socialist parties, but also had enormous international consequences.

For all opponents of socialism, Khrushchev's revelations were important

a welcome opportunity to intensify the ideological and psychological struggle against socialism with all our might and to use the inevitable instability in some socialist countries to support and organize counter-revolutionary efforts if possible.

Extraordinarily difficult situations arose in Poland and Hungary in the summer and autumn of 1956, and it was not easy to assess them.

The Polish party found itself in an extremely awkward position for several reasons:

suffered greatly from Stalin's terror. The entire leadership of the Polish Communist Party was liquidated in 1938 as allegedly contaminated with Trotskyism, and the dubious fate of the Polish army officers murdered in Katyn in 1939 also weighed heavily on relations with the Soviet Union. In addition, there was the traditional anti-Russian sentiment in large sections of the population that came from earlier history, which was also strengthened by the new Poland's noticeable dependence on the Soviet Union.

When I was in Warsaw in 1955,

Some comrades told me in shock that they had only now learned the truth about the death of the leading Communist Party officials. The extremely critical situation that arose in the summer and autumn of 1956 could hardly be mastered by the leadership of the PVAP under Edward Ochab. After thorough deliberations, the party's Central Committee decided to elect the party's former general secretary, Vladislav Gomulka, as first secretary, after he had been expelled and imprisoned under Soviet pressure five years earlier for allegedly nationalist deviations

was. In my opinion, this was a courageous and sensible decision, as Gomulka had the greatest political and moral authority in Poland at the time.

However, in the light of further developments from 1956 to the end of the GDR and also my own political experiences, I have to say that my criticism of Ulbricht's handling of the XX. The party congress of the CPSU and its consequences arose from correct theoretical considerations and were also justified from a political point of view, because it did not avoid uncertainty and confusion in the party, but increased it. There could certainly have been better thought out options

Clarification about Khrushchev's speech was given without causing much damage. But that would have required, at least in certain committees, an open and honest discussion to determine the line and the corresponding measures. But the leadership was not in a position to do this at the time because it was simply overwhelmed by events, did not have a unified view and sometimes reacted hectically in view of very real dangers.

On the other hand, it later became clear to me that, given Ulbricht's dependence on the Soviet Union and his experiences in 1953,

the leadership of the CPSU with the GDR had no other option than to officially agree to the decision of the Central Committee of the CPSU on the cult of personality and its consequences. At that time, the SED was certainly the last party that could dare to oppose the CPSU and make demands on it - regardless of what Ulbricht personally may have thought about this decision and also Khrushchev's report.

A major public discussion about all the issues involved would - apart from the possible consequences for the internal stability of the GDR - inevitably lead to a confrontation

with the CPSU under Khrushchev. At that time, the SED and the GDR needed nothing more urgently than support from Khrushchev and the Soviet Union.

When weighing up what was more vital for the preservation of the GDR, it could only be decided, for very serious reasons, that the unpleasant suppression of a broad discussion and all efforts that endangered the internal stability and security of the GDR could be

accepted as the lesser evil. But in my opinion this does not justify the excessive prosecution of a number of intellectuals, who are often the party's spokesmen

had critical views and were accused of alleged counter-revolutionary efforts. I only considered a conviction to be justified in cases in which applicable laws and regulations were clearly violated, and as far as I know this was only the case with Wolfgang Harich, who allowed himself to be seduced into working with the SPD's Eastern Office and other West German institutions, whose declared goal was to eliminate the GDR, to conspire and negotiate a new government. (By the way, this was later quite clear to him and he also acknowledged it.)

If you compare the development of the

socialist countries in the years after the XXth century. Party congress of the CPSU, then in my opinion one must recognize that the leadership of the SED under Walter Ulbricht was overall far better able to survive the critical period and to continue and complete the construction of the foundations of socialism than countries like Poland and Hungary.

The GDR was always in a complicated situation that placed high demands on the political leadership. On the one hand, it was very dependent on the Soviet Union, but on the other hand, it was constantly confronted with the other German state, the Federal Republic of Germany.

whose declared national goal was the elimination of the GDR. Nevertheless, there were diverse relationships, connections and contacts between the two German states and their citizens, which stemmed from their shared history, which is why national problems always had to be taken into account.

I consider it a proof of Walter Ulbricht's political and statesmanlike qualities that he was able to get the GDR through the dangers associated with this situation and at the same time single-mindedly kept an eye on the economic, social, political and ideological tasks that were in place

the transition period to socialism had to be solved. Despite many difficulties, it was possible to create the foundations of socialism in the GDR, and at the beginning of the 1960s the question arose as to how the development of socialist society should continue. According to the socialism theory coined by Stalin, after the end of the transition period and the resulting "victory of socialism," the next strategic task would be the transition to the construction of communism, i.e. the higher phase of the new social formation. Stalin had this since the 18th century.

Party conference 1935 in several speeches as well as at the XVIII. at the 1939 party congress of the CPSU, and this remained the strategic basic line in the new party program of the CPSU from 1961 under Khrushchev. The task that was formulated there was to essentially establish the higher development phase of the new social formation, communism, over the next twenty years. This view of socialism and communism was based on the assumption that socialism was only a short transitional phase between capitalism and communism

has an independent socio-economic and political quality, but is more a mixture of "birthmarks of capitalism" and "germs of communism".

Instead of developing socialism as a social system in its entirety, continuing to perfect it on its own foundations and according to its laws until it has reached the economic, social and intellectual level of maturity that enables the transition to the higher phase of communism, this should socialist intermediate stage must be passed through as quickly as possible,

so that the great goal of communist society is achieved, in which class differences are abolished, the state withers away, material abundance prevails and all conditions for the free development of individuals exist. Undoubtedly, these illusory ideas and expectations of the future also contained elements of chiasm and the ideal escape from the difficulties and inadequacies of the still imperfect socialist society. Since the criticism of the personality cult surrounding Stalin largely excluded his theoretical views and these

were still considered constitutive components of Marxism-Leninism, such views about the soon possible transition to communism emerged in the SED as well as in other socialist countries.

It speaks for Walter Ulbricht's sense of reality that he did not get involved in illusory projects, but rather took a thorough inventory and objective assessment of the level of development achieved so far in society, its productive forces and production relations, labor productivity and economic performance as well as society

people's consciousness became the basis for further tasks.

In contrast to Khrushchev, he also resisted the temptation of ambition to associate his person and his name with the achievement of the communist goal, thereby showing that he was concerned with the cause and not with personal glory. From the experiences of the GDR's previous development it had become clear to him that Stalin's simple formulas were not suitable for understanding such complicated and lengthy social transformation processes, and even less so

to plan and manage consciously. This is all the more so because in the developed capitalist countries the scientific and technical revolution led to a renewed upswing in the productive forces and thus to a significant increase in labor productivity - in complete contrast to Stalin's claims in his last work "Economic Problems of Socialism".

In the immediate daily confrontation with the industrially highly developed capitalist Federal Republic of Germany, it became clear what efforts were still required to bring the material standard of living to a level

to raise a level that met the demands of socialism and made it appear as a convincing alternative to capitalism.

It was therefore important to significantly increase the economic performance of society, and this was only possible through the development of scientific and technical progress and the comprehensive use of its results.

The cumbersome bureaucratic planning and management system of the economy, which had largely been adopted from the Soviet Union, increasingly proved to be unsuitable for scientific and technical purposes

to stimulate progress. All realistic considerations led to the conclusion that the socialist society that emerged in the course of the transition period was by no means finished and perfect, but that it still required a longer period of all-round development and perfection before it reached the level of economic maturity that was the indispensable condition for the transition to the higher one stage of development of communism.

Walter Ulbricht did not shy away from this conclusion on the VI. To formulate it clearly and unambiguously at the SED party conference in 1963

declared that now, after the completion of the transition period, the "comprehensive construction of socialism" was the strategic goal. In doing so, he rejected all communist illusions.

Even if this new formula was not yet sufficiently justified from a theoretical point of view and not yet sufficiently filled with concrete content from a practical point of view, it nevertheless represented a decisive advance in the conception of socialism, which served as the basis for the further departure from the primitively simplified Stalinist conception and for elaboration more comprehensive

reform plans served. Now it was a matter of drawing all the consequences from this approach in order to determine the concrete ways of further shaping the socialist society.

At this important turning point it became clear that Walter Ulbricht was not only a real politician who looked for the next practical solutions based on the prevailing conditions, but also a theoretical mind who sought a scientifically based concept for the long-term development of socialist society. This not only required the theory of Marxism, but also - from

Based on the foundation of their findings about the laws of social development - it was also necessary to rely on a number of natural sciences, social sciences and technical sciences.

This insight determined his positive and close relationship with science. The further perfection of the socialist society could only take place in close connection with the scientific and technical revolution, because only in this way could the required level of development of the productive forces be achieved

could be reached.

Since the GDR hardly had any significant raw materials, its production had to be particularly strong

"Intelligence-intensive" and, if possible, exportable products were oriented, which is why the development and promotion of modern technical sciences was of particular importance. It was a testament to Walter Ulbricht's foresight that he recognized modern science as a decisive productive force in society and consistently worked to use it more and more extensively for socialism.

By forming the Research Council

In the GDR, an organ was created to plan and coordinate the development of scientific research, and significant funds were allocated for the further development and diversification of scientific research and training institutions. Numerous new universities, especially in the technical sciences sector, emerged at that time as investments in the future.

At the same time, at the beginning of this new stage in the development of socialist society, a number of temporary research groups and commissions were formed to deal with the

Analyzing the various areas of society and developing proposals and forecasts as a basis for future political decisions. This created an atmosphere of open discussion, there should be no taboos, all problems could be discussed openly in order to find the best solutions. That was the time when it was also possible to publicly criticize Stalin's dogmatism and to deal with his views in detail. At that time the book "Marxist Philosophy" was also written and published, in which the

primitive schematism was consistently eliminated, which had prevailed in Marxist philosophy for decades since the publication of the work "On Dialectical and Historical Materialism," which was supposedly written by Stalin.

Of fundamental importance for the reform projects was the development of the New Economic System of Planning and Management of the National Economy (NÖSPL), which was started on the initiative of Walter Ulbricht and introduced after preparatory experiments. It was aimed at giving the companies greater independence, thereby also protecting their interests

to better emphasize it, to limit central planning to the most important key figures and to orient production primarily towards qualitative criteria. The law of value, profitability and profit as well as the orientation towards the intensification of production and the acceleration of scientific and technical progress were given particular importance.

This new planning and management system proved its worth in practice and led to an acceleration and intensification of economic development in a relatively short period of time, which also led to a noticeable increase in the

living standards made possible. Theoretically, it meant moving away from the Soviet planning system, which dates back to the era of extensive economic development, with its oversized bureaucratic mechanisms and centrally specified indicators, which tended towards more and more bureaucracy and therefore became increasingly ineffective.

But the distance from Stalin's model of socialism was not limited to the economic sphere.

There were also significant differences socially and politically, and the differences were increasingly widening.

Stalin argued that...

Allegedly, in the era of socialism, the class struggle would intensify and take on harder forms the further socialist society advanced in its development, because the resistance of the remaining remnants of the former ruling classes would grow. This formed the basis for the excessive use of violent means and methods, including acts of terrorism, and at the same time also for the oversized security apparatus.

In the GDR, too, there were at times sharper conflicts during the transition period, but

The leadership of the SED under Ulbricht tried very hard not to let the fight escalate and to seek understanding. This was reflected in the fact that after corporations and large companies were transferred to public ownership (partly through referendums), medium-sized and smaller private companies, shops and trading companies were able to continue to exist. They were included in the planned production and circulation and thereby secured their existence. Even in the new period of further development and perfection of socialism, Ulbricht stuck to this line. He repeatedly stated that in the socialist

Society needs all people and would have a perspective. In the other socialist countries - with the exception of Yugoslavia and later Hungary - virtually all companies, regardless of their size, were expropriated according to the Soviet model and transferred to social, ie state, ownership.

Ulbricht's other approach avoided using violent methods wherever possible and paid much more attention to the various economic, social and political aspects in the relationships between classes and strata. In economic terms, this was for the entire population of

Advantage because small and medium-sized companies had a significant share in the production of consumer goods and thus made an important contribution to supply. Socially, it was much more effective to preserve the skills and work of these classes than to uproot them and place them in an uncertain social situation through a rapid and complete transfer of their means of production into social ownership.

From a political point of view, it was undoubtedly more beneficial for society as a whole to avoid political conflicts and to give all forces the opportunity to actively participate in reconstruction

to participate and to promote their interests. In joint consultations between the parties, ways and methods were sought to integrate all those willing to build up into the long-term development of socialist society, to take their interests into account and to offer them a perspective. Walter Ulbricht even went so far as to speak of a "socialist human community".

Although in some respects this was more of a goal than a social reality, because there were significant differences of interests in this community

unchanged, it expressed the desire and effort of the ruling class forces of the new GDR society to take into account the interests of all sections of the population and to seek consensus.

This contradicted very decidedly Stalin's thesis about the intensification of the class struggle under socialism, but it was completely in line with Marx's thesis that although the class struggle resulting from conflicting interests could not be completely avoided, the time when society was transformed into socialism was a rational intermediate stage, in which this one

Class struggle can and should be waged in the most humane forms so that social losses are minimized.

This was a completely different approach to the problem of the use of violence and violent methods in the transition period and in socialism than was practiced at the time by Stalin, who considered violence and violent methods to be more effective than persuasion and cooperation, but in practice this was led to great social losses.

Also with regard to the political system and the constitution

In socialist society, Walter Ulbricht increasingly went his own way, which differed from that of the Soviet system, which most socialist countries had adopted with certain modifications.

Immediately after liberation from fascism, the Soviet military administration allowed the formation of anti-fascist democratic parties. This is how the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party emerged again, which united in 1946 to form the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, and the Christian Democratic Union

and the Liberal Democratic Party. Thanks to the intensive efforts of Wilhelm Pieck, Walter Ulbricht and Otto Grotewohl, these parties agreed to work closely together in building an anti-fascist democratic order and to share responsibility for everyone. The first free democratic elections to the state parliaments took place in the fall of 1946, with the parties competing against each other with their competing lists. As a result of this election, the united Workers' Party had the greatest political weight because it had relative power in all state parliaments

and in some cases also won an absolute majority. However, according to the agreement reached, all parties were still involved in the governments and administrations with responsible functions.

So no alliances were formed that led to the opposition between government and opposition, but rather coalitions in which all parties were involved.

This so-called bloc policy united all political forces in the shared responsibility for democratic reconstruction. Although there were later disputes in various parties about the continuation of the bloc policy,

The managers who stuck to this agreed line prevailed. Therefore, it was retained even after the founding of the GDR.

Accordingly, all parties - in the meantime the Democratic Peasants' Party and the National Democratic Party had been added - were involved in the state organs with the highest functions.

With the entry into the transition period to socialism in 1952, a new situation arose because it was no longer a question of establishing the anti-fascist democratic order, but of building a socialist one

Company left. Under these conditions, the previous alliance between the parties could well have broken down. But the leadership of the SED under Walter Ulbricht managed to get the other parties to support this path. This was certainly only possible because the foundation had already been laid for a policy of including the classes and strata politically represented by the other parties in socialist development. Violent interventions in property relations were avoided and forms of cooperation between the state-owned or in the economic area were also established

socialist sector and private companies, which protected the interests of private owners and gave them a longer-term perspective.

This was a crucial economic basis for ensuring that political cooperation between all parties could continue.

Of course, it was inevitable that the existing differences in interests would lead to friction and conflict, but there was always a basis for achieving a balance of interests and an understanding without resorting to violent methods.

Nevertheless, development and

The design of the political system of the GDR with the corresponding state power organs and functional mechanisms is not straightforward and free of contradictions. The state has the monopoly on violence, and in this sense every state has a dictatorial component - regardless of the form in which it is organized and whether it exercises this dictatorship with moderate or violent means and methods. According to its class content, the socialist state is the political rule of the working class and the peasant class allied with it, which was expressed in the fact that their basic interests are state policy

certain, while the interests of other sections of society were taken into account provided they were compatible with these basic interests.

Since the socialist state meant the political rule of the majority over a small minority of society, it could, by its nature, operate far more democratically than any bourgeois state.

What is clear in theory was, however, far more complicated in real practice, because after the beginning of the transition period to socialism, significant changes took place in the structure and functioning of the system

states, some of which were also based on the Soviet experience. In the Soviet state, however, for various historical reasons, the dictatorial elements were far more pronounced than the democratic ones. Although conditions were largely different in the GDR, the Soviet model still left certain traces in the structure and functioning mechanisms of the political system. Of course, it also had to be noted that very intensive subversive activity was organized against the GDR by numerous Western secret services, which resulted in a...

Security and defensive thinking developed. Suspicion and mistrust increased. Since these organs all over the world work with methods and means that are often associated with coercion and violence, one can safely admit that even in the GDR the relations between democratic and dictatorial elements did not correspond to requirements in every respect.

The experience of previous developments made it clear that the advantages and positive aspects of the GDR's political system were at the same time associated with a number of negative phenomena that had an inhibiting effect

the democratic participation and co-determination of the parties, the elected representative bodies and the population. Significant reforms were therefore not only necessary in the economy - there also had to be corresponding changes in the political system.

There was no model for this, and given the special situation of the GDR - on the one hand, heavily dependent on the Soviet Union, on the other hand, constantly confronted with the economically much stronger Federal Republic of Germany - this was a difficult and also delicate undertaking.  
How should he, for example?

Contradiction between the necessary development and deepening of democracy on the one hand and the legitimate or supposed state security interests on the other hand?

Although there were several campaigns like

"Work with, plan with, govern with" in order to involve the population more in solving state tasks, but in my opinion these had no lasting effect. In order to change this situation, it became necessary to create a new basis for the population's closer connection with the socialist state.

The constitution in force since 1949 was

is now so far removed from political and social reality that a new constitution that corresponds to socialist conditions should be drawn up, discussed with the people and approved by a referendum. Ulbricht apparently viewed this proposal as the first major step towards overcoming democratic deficits and further democratizing all of social life. The participation of large parts of the population in the discussion about the draft constitution led them directly to all important state problems. In addition, there was

give them the opportunity to comment and influence it.

Walter Ulbricht considered this path to be absolutely necessary and, even against resistance in the SED Politburo, he ensured that the draft of the new constitution was discussed and discussed with the population in thousands of meetings and that all critical objections and suggestions were taken into account and evaluated by the Constitutional Commission and the constitution was finally submitted to the people as sovereigns for adoption in a free vote. Is there one in bourgeois democracies?

Constitution that was confirmed in this way by the popular sovereign?

The fact that the constitution was approved with a large majority showed that this approach was the right one and could contribute to eliminating democratic deficits. The objection raised again and again that this is not the case

The fact that it was a "free decision" has no basis and simply shows ignorance or bias, because the ballot paper contained the alternative yes or no, approval or rejection. There was no possibility of manipulation.

In the course of development, Walter was

It also became clear to Ulbricht that the electoral system, which was basically adopted from the Soviet Union, with the candidate lists previously agreed upon by the parties, was unsatisfactory and stood in the way of further democratization of the political system. He therefore planned, as reported by his close associates, to continue this process and to prepare a reform of electoral laws and procedures so that citizens would have greater and more effective opportunities to determine the composition of elected representative bodies.

Of great importance for the future

The new local constitution created on Walter Ulbricht's initiative also democratized state administrative work, granting the districts, districts and municipalities significantly greater rights and decision-making powers.

The national problem played an important role in the entire development of the GDR. As a result of the state split that was consciously brought about by the Western powers with the active support of West German forces, two German states were created, but the German nation did not immediately break up into two nations. In one that lasted many centuries

Historically, after long struggles against the feudal fragmentation of Germany, it was finally united as a large bourgeois nation. It connected the German population through a dense network of economic relationships, through relatively similar social structures, through a gradually strengthening national consciousness, through the common language and culture, through the traditional manners, customs and habits into a relatively unified community, which as a historical form of development of society. Basic economic, social and ideological

Bonds of capitalist society united with the ethnic characteristics of the people and integrated them into a nation that, although it formed a relatively unified community compared to other nations, was nevertheless characterized and torn apart by sharp class differences and corresponding interests.

The fascist German state had been destroyed as a result of the victory of the anti-Hitler coalition, but the German nation continued to exist. If the provisions of the Potsdam Agreement had been adhered to, then there would also have been a uniform

German state can be established. However, it had to remain demilitarized and the economic and social foundations of fascism should have been eliminated. This would have preserved the capitalist basis of the nation, but the power of the large corporations and banks would have been broken, and the further development of the German nation would have been determined in political disputes by the emerging balance of power between the democratic parties and their mass base.

In the longer term, this could also mean the prospect of the whole of Germany transitioning to the establishment of one

socialist society, especially since in West Germany at that time not only the SPD under Schumacher, but even the CDU under Adenauer publicly expressed the view that capitalism had failed and a new socialist social order had to be created. The SED always took a decisive stand against the division of the state in Germany because it wanted to preserve the perspective of a unified development of the entire German nation. Walter Ulbricht in particular repeatedly came up with important initiatives and suggestions in this regard

Many West German politicians who actively pursued or supported the politics of division acted according to the motto "Stop the thief!" and wanted to blame Walter Ulbricht, of all people, for the division. However, the decades-long social development in the two states, which led to the complete restoration of imperialism in the Federal Republic of Germany and to socialist society in the GDR, could not remain without long-term effects on the nation. While their social content, the network of economic, social, political and

Although ideological relationships changed in different directions and thus reshaped the foundations of national life, the nation's ethnic similarities such as language, family ties, manners, customs, habits, cultural heritage and traditions remained largely intact and only changed very slowly. This state of the German nation could ultimately be characterized as being at different stages of development - in terms of its crucial foundations and contents - but the ethnic foundations and contents

continued to have great similarities. State separation did not automatically and quickly mean the collapse of the nation. Their further fate would rather depend on the course of historical development. In this question, too, it is a testament to Walter Ulbricht's sense of reality and foresight that he avoided hasty and final conclusions, although he naturally also recognized the tendency of the possible emergence of two different German nations with different - either capitalist or socialist - foundations and content

recognized. But since history usually has a long breath, he advised caution and restraint. That is why the wording was chosen in the new socialist constitution of the GDR: "The German Democratic Republic is a socialist state of the German nation." In his opinion, there was apparently no need to write final judgments about the fate of the German nation into the new constitution. History thus remained open to future developments, and this also left practical politics with greater scope for a longer period of time. There among the created

Given that the two German states were expected to coexist for a longer period of time and that numerous national ties were still strong, he considered it necessary to look for ways of peaceful coexistence. He suggested a cautious approach through initial official contacts at the level of heads of government in order to reduce the confrontation. As we now know, this met with considerable resistance from parts of the SED Politburo, who were of the opinion that a policy of strict demarcation from the Federal Republic of Germany was appropriate. But one can assume with certainty that Ulbricht's preferred line

was much easier to convey to the population of the GDR because it did not overwhelm the level of development of social consciousness and public opinion and avoided unnecessary alarm. If we look at the entirety of all reform projects and political actions that Walter Ulbricht initiated, started, carried out and further planned, then they fit together like elements of a system whose focus was the idea of transforming the socialist society in the GDR in one way to design that, on the one hand, they meet the basic

took into account the findings of Marxism as well as previous positive and negative experiences, but on the other hand also took into account the modern conditions of the scientific and technical revolution and the requirements of economic competition with a significantly changed capitalist world. The substantial reforms initiated by Ulbricht, especially in the period from 1963 to 1970, objectively also meant a pushback and partial overcoming of Stalinism in the GDR, which also left its mark on the structures and functional mechanisms here

the party and the state as well as in the social consciousness. This may seem paradoxical, as Ulbricht was long considered a loyal follower of Stalin. However, everything suggests that he drew serious and far-reaching conclusions from the 20th century, albeit with a certain delay. Party Congress and the previous experiences of socialism in the Soviet Union and the GDR and now strived to make the socialist society of the GDR more effective, more attractive and also more democratic. But that inevitably also led to

a progressive move away from Stalin's simplified theoretical ideas of socialism, which in many respects did not correspond adequately to the basic insights of Marxism, to which the Soviet leadership continued to adhere even under Khrushchev and even more so under Brezhnev.

However, Ulbricht did not carry out this development through polemical debate or even confrontation with the leadership of the CPSU, but rather through practical reforms that were intended to convince with their results. This was not simply due to the GDR's dependent situation

by the Soviet Union, which certainly also played a role, but above all corresponded to the internationalist attitude of fundamental solidarity with the first country of socialism, to which Ulbricht steadfastly stuck.

The experience and knowledge gained in this way strengthened his understanding that socialist society would still need a long time to achieve the economic, social and intellectual maturity from which the transition to the higher phase of communism could become a real one task could become.

All ideas of a rapid

Development towards a communist society, in which material abundance would prevail and all conditions for the all-round development of individuals would be present, were theoretically based on a superficial understanding and interpretation of Marx's relevant statements about the two phases of development of the new social formation. In practice, they were an expression of revolutionary impatience and the associated illusory expectations of the future, which often enough obscured the real difficulties of the initial stage.

Marx had for the possible duration of the

In the lower phase of development, which we called socialism according to Lenin's suggestion, we did not mention specific periods of time, but rather referred to the decisive criterion as the level of economic maturity of the society that had to be reached so that the transition to the higher phase of communist society could take place.

Lenin made this concrete with the thesis that socialism must achieve higher labor productivity than capitalism.

It was of no use at all to maintain the level of development of the productive forces, which was still considerably lower,

of labor productivity and living standards as long as the socialist society was not even able to ensure the continuous and reliable supply of consumer goods, spare parts and food to the population at a level that corresponded to the goals and demands of socialism. The conclusion could only be to develop the socialist society in its totality in a long-term planned development as a social system in which all elements are integrated on the basis of its specific laws

smooth functional circles interacted with each other and thereby produced stable driving forces for further progress.

To achieve this, this social system also had to have its own economic, social and cultural quality, which could neither consist of a mixture of "remnants of capitalism" and "none of communism" nor could it simply be an imitation of the achievements of capitalism and bourgeois society. Walter Ulbricht coined the often ridiculed or ridiculed formula of "overtaking without catching up", the deep meaning of which

was to make it clear that it was not a question of simply imitating capitalism with a socialist approach, but rather of fundamentally seeking new paths and always aiming for the necessary new quality of socialism as a goal.

The quintessence of all theoretical considerations and practical experiences came to the conclusion that socialist society is not a short-term transitional state, but should be viewed as a relatively independent social formation that will last for a long time.

Walter Ulbricht formulated this fundamental insight in 1967

a lecture on the 100th anniversary of the publication of the first volume of Marx's main work "Das Kapital", in which he highlighted the importance of Marx's theory for the shaping of socialist society. This cannot be overstated. I considered it then and still consider it today to be the most important contribution to the development of the theory of socialism since Lenin. This gave a realistic conception that generalized all previous experiences and at the same time freed from utopian and illusory elements, which provided a solid foundation for the development of practical policy for further development

shaping the socialist society.

I still remember the discussion with my Viennese friend Walter Hollitscher, the well-known Marxist philosopher. We had come to the same assessment quite independently of one another and were in complete agreement, although we came to the conclusion from many considerations that socialist society could well need another hundred to one hundred and fifty years to solve this great task. For various reasons, Ulbricht's statements did not resonate everywhere

on understanding and consent, as this meant that some "sacred cows" were slaughtered and long-held illusions were destroyed. Above all, this affected the view spread by the CPSU that the Soviet Union had been in power since Stalin's declaration at the XVIII. Party congress in 1939 that the main strategic task was now the transition to communism and was already in the "transition to communism". After Stalin's death, the CPSU failed to critically analyze his unfounded and primitive theory of socialism and communism and to distance itself from the voluntarism and illusionism associated with it

to be consistently separated. Instead, she worked out the new party program of 1961 on this theoretical basis and formulated the task of establishing a communist society within twenty years. In doing so, she became increasingly entangled in the web of



illusionary ideas and unrealistic expectations, from which she was unable to escape later, because the decisive objective conditions for solving this task were missing. The deep contradiction that inevitably arose between the constantly widespread ideology and social reality had to be resolved

therefore further intensify and have negative effects on many areas of social life. But agreeing with Walter Ulbricht's views would also have meant admitting that the CPSU had so far pursued an unfounded and unsustainable line with regard to its strategic goal. However, this called into question the role model role of the CPSU, which would have led to a significant loss of authority in the international communist movement.

Although Walter Ulbricht completely avoided this difficult problem in his remarks and everyone

Contained polemics, the implications were of course clear.

Despite all efforts to further strengthen the friendly relationship with the Soviet Union - and I am sure that in Ulbricht's case these did not only arise from considerations of utility, but were rooted in his entire attitude towards the Soviet Union - it was inevitable that a greater distance arose in relation to one another, especially since Khrushchev, who was a friend and supporter of the GDR, had now been replaced by Brezhnev.

But unfortunately there was also resistance to this line among the SED leadership

Ulbricht's. A number of members of the Politburo were unable to grasp the fundamental meaning and theoretical value of Ulbricht's conception. Therefore, a group formed in the Politburo that basically rejected his reform course and acted against it by delaying, thwarting or even sabotaging some measures.

In addition, Ulbricht had now reached an old age, so that his replacement by a successor was on the agenda in the foreseeable future.

Under these circumstances it was probably not just a lack of insight

Farsightedness and the correctness of Ulbricht's fundamental considerations, but also other considerations that caused the majority of the members of the Politburo to turn away from Ulbricht and not to stand against the prospective successor Erich Honecker.

During this important reform period, Walter Ulbricht could usually only rely on a wavering majority in the Politburo. And as the time for his retirement for reasons of age approached, it shrank to just a few votes.

These differences of opinion and differences in the Politburo permeated

Of course not to the public at the time, but our Institute for Social Sciences was structurally a department of the Central Committee and connected to the apparatus by numerous threads. This gave us at least a partial idea of what was happening on this level.

Those in the know were well aware that Erich Honecker, who Ulbricht had long viewed as his potential successor, which is why he appointed him as head of the secretariat, along with Paul Verner and others, were staunch opponents of Ulbricht's reform plans.

This led to Ulbricht at some point

became convinced that Honecker was not suitable for the role of First Secretary, which she of course found out sooner or later and therefore took countermeasures.

Since Ulbricht, for obvious reasons, had long been a thorn in Brezhnev's side due to his independent views and his independent policies, which had an impact on the international communist movement and, above all, on the other socialist countries, there was a constellation of interests between Honecker and Brezhnev arose, aimed at bringing about the change in the

Accelerate leadership. Many of us noticed the uncertainty and sometimes a

There were various signs of a certain power vacuum, without knowing that a majority of the Politburo, on Honecker's initiative, had meanwhile sent a letter to Brezhnev in which they proposed replacing Ulbricht and asked for approval of this step. The die had already been cast when a Central Committee meeting took place in December 1970, at which Walter Ulbricht gave the main speech, but at the same time Honecker and Stoph also appeared and countered some of Ulbricht's statements.

This conference meant the de facto disempowerment of Ulbricht, but this happened in such a way that the Central Committee members did not understand it at all.

This became clear to me when, a short time later, Kurt Hager carried out a large evaluation in the Central Committee with all responsible heads of scientific and cultural institutions, even though there was no objective reason for this event. His long, unfocused presentation - very unusual for him - was peppered with numerous quotes from the speeches of Honecker and Stoph, and he often criticized Ulbricht and his views without his name

to be mentioned even once.

This was a bit irritating for most of those present, but they had no idea what was going on, while Werner Kalweit, who was sitting next to me, and I immediately understood that Walter Ulbricht's replacement had already been decided. Because I knew that Hager had a high opinion of Walter Ulbricht, whereas he considered Erich Honecker to be far less capable, to put it mildly.

Hager's appearance served less to inform us about the Central Committee plenum than to assure Honecker of his loyalty.

How conspiratorial the process

I could also see from this that Lene Berg, who was a member of the Central Committee and at that time held an important position in the editorial team of the international magazine For Peace and Socialism, had taken part in the Central Committee meeting, but was completely unaware was. In January 1971 I was in Prague for a meeting in the editorial office of the magazine and visited her in her apartment. She was blown away when I told her that the Walter Ulbricht era was unfortunately over and that I was skeptical about our future under the incoming First Secretary. That was completely impossible, she replied

excited, because there was no mention of this at all at the entire Central Committee meeting. When she asked how I came up with such an idea, I listed all the evidence that suggested the die had already been cast. She then became very thoughtful and said that if she really thought about it, she had been exhibiting rather strange behavior for some time. Experienced the "Big House" but couldn't make sense of it. Ulbricht resisted, but since the majority of the Politburo had already joined the stronger battalions, he had no choice and agreed to resign. That's how it became

Erich Honecker, whom he had groomed and favored as a successor for a long time, but then considered unsuitable to continue the reform work he had begun, was elected First Secretary. This ended the entire reform program designed by Ulbricht, which could give socialist society greater development capacity. The successor very quickly - in full agreement with Brezhnev - returned to the structures and functional mechanisms that had been tried and tested in the Soviet Union, declared all of Ulbricht's fundamental insights and constructive considerations to be wrong and tried to respond to each one

to disparage and discredit its services in any way conceivable.

This led to great uncertainty in the SED, because it was difficult to understand why everything that had previously been considered correct should suddenly be wrong.

Contrary to the view that socialism was a relatively independent social formation that would last a long time, Honecker stated in several public speeches that we were already approaching communism and that our generation would still live under communism. In general, there was now more and more in the language used within the party

"Socialist" was replaced by "communist," as if terminological regulations would change something about social reality. In contrast to Ulbricht's policy of granting small and medium-sized private companies and companies as well as mixed parastatal companies a long development perspective and integrating the associated classes more and more into the socialist economy and society, Honecker completely eliminated these companies and left them in large combines, even though they are mainly involved in their production

had no interest.

With regard to the complicated and sensitive national problems, Honecker also abandoned the long-term, cautious policy. He explained that history had already finally decided the national question in Germany, because in the GDR there existed a socialist nation that had nothing in common with the capitalist nation of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Listing all the abrupt turns is beyond my concern, so the above may suffice to characterize the successor's completely different approach to its predecessor. But the

The associated break draws attention to a serious omission on the part of Walter Ulbricht with regard to his personnel policy. You can't blame him for wanting to turn the Politburo into a seniors' club, because he ensured very early on that even very young comrades were elected to the Politburo. Ewald, Kleiber, Jarowsky, Halbritter, Mittag were mostly not even forty years old at the time of their election, and they were experts in the areas that were of great importance for the further development of socialist society. But he was - for whatever reason - way too much

For a long time he was fixated on Erich Honecker as the favored successor, although his limited abilities did not go unnoticed by him. Honecker was able to direct the party apparatus and use the associated means of power very well. But he was relatively weak in theoretical terms. His vanity was also a character flaw. Walter Ulbricht had apparently failed to consider other personnel options in a timely manner and perhaps to prepare several potential successors to consistently continue the reform course. When he finally came to the conclusion that Honecker

If this was not an option, it was already too late.

The fact that he considered suggesting Alfred Neumann<sup>2</sup>, who consistently supported his course in the Politburo, confirms this. Neumann himself later said that this task would have been too big for him and that he therefore would not have taken it on.

This dilemma did not only affect the SED and Walter Ulbricht, but also points to a fundamental deficiency in all socialist countries and their governing parties, because there was no mode for them regulated by party statutes and constitutions

Handing over the highest leadership positions to the next generation. Often the problem was only solved - as in the Vatican - by death or by harmful diadochi battles with all their mostly negative consequences.

It is a well-known fact that Walter Ulbricht was not particularly popular among the population for a long time. There were many reasons for this, which had less to do with him personally than with the difficult conditions of the post-war period. It is always very easy to find someone to blame for shortcomings and grievances, and since he bore a great deal of responsibility, he was blamed

a lot of things that were not in his power to change. But as time went on, attitudes towards him became more and more positive and, particularly in the 1960s, he found increasing recognition and respect.

As already mentioned at the beginning, my personal attitude towards him was by no means free of contradictions and critical reservations, which meant that I was not one of his supporters, although I always had great respect and respect for his abilities and achievements. My personal relationship with him became increasingly more positive than I was in the 1960s

noted that he was by no means superficial about the profound consequences of the 20th century. Party congress of the CPSU and the previous experiences of socialism, especially in the Soviet Union, but had drawn very far-reaching conclusions from it. My respect and respect grew as I realized that he did not approach the problems practically in order to achieve short-term success, but rather pursued a theoretically thought-out and justified concept that was oriented towards the long-term success of socialism. It wasn't just them that impressed me

Foresight and consistency in his politics, but also the prudence and caution that he exercised, especially in his relations with the CPSU and the Soviet Union. In doing so, he refrained from portraying himself as a great theorist who believed that he had to teach the whole world with ever new wisdom. He increasingly proved to be a politician who - drawing on a long practical experience - was still able to learn, even in old age, to overcome outdated views and dogmatic ideas and to develop forward-looking theoretical and practical ideas for the successful design of the

to develop socialist society.

For all of these reasons, I am of the opinion that Walter Ulbricht was the most important political leader and statesman in the history of the GDR and that he deserves great recognition. From the international guard of old communist party leaders, he was the only one who was able to contain the shocks in the communist movement after the 20th century. to get through the CPSU party congress and ultimately draw constructive conclusions from it, which is why he rightly gained a high international reputation.

Kurt Hager (1912-1998), journalist, 1930

KPD, 1932 RFB, from 1937 to 1939 in Spain.

Exile in Great Britain, 1949 professor of philosophy at the Humboldt University, 1952 head of the science department in the SED Central Committee. 1959 candidate and 1963 member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the SED and head of the Ideological Commission of the Politburo.

Member of the People's Chamber from 1958 to 1989, member of the State Council since 1976, and of the National Defense Council since 1979.

Resigned from all functions at the end of 1989, expelled from the SED-PDS in January 1990. Joined the DKP in 1995

Alfred Neumann (1909-2001), carpenter, member of the KPD in 1929 and of the workers' sports club "Fichte" since 1919, emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1934, expelled there in 1938, participant in the Spanish War, sentenced to eight years in prison by the People's Court in 1942, escaped from the SS -Penal Battalion Dirlwanger, returned to after being taken prisoner by the Soviets in 1947

Berlin. From 1951 to 1953 deputy mayor of Berlin, from 1953 to 1957 first secretary of the SED district leadership,

Member of the People's Chamber from 1949 to 1989,

Member of the Central Committee since 1954, Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED from 1957 to 1961, Chairman of the Economic Council from 1961 to 1965 and Minister for Materials Management from 1965 to 1968. Member of the Presidium of the Council of Ministers since 1962 and one of the first two deputy chairmen of the Council of Ministers since 1968. At the end of 1989 he resigned from all functions and was expelled from the SED-PDS in January 1990.

Gerald Götting

I met Adenauer and Ulbricht

Gerald Götting, born in 1923, visited the Francke Foundations in Halle, labor service, intelligence service in the Luftwaffe, American captivity in 1945. 1946 member of the CDU, studied philology, German and history. 1949 to 1966 Secretary General and from 1966 to 1989 Chairman of the CDU. 1949 to 1990 Member of the People's Chamber, until 1958 as Vice President and

Deputy President, chairman of the CDU parliamentary group until 1963, President of the People's Chamber from 1969 to 1975.

President of the League for Friendship of Peoples since 1976. From 1960 to 1989 Deputy Chairman of the State Council of the GDR. Resigned from the merged CDU in February 1991.

It is said that the founding of the CDU goes back to an instruction from Stalin?

That is true. Stalin was in doubt as to whether the KPD would be able to reach the masses of Germans after the war, what with twelve years of nasty anti-communist Nazi propaganda

and agitation was not unreasonable. After all, even before 1933, the party had not achieved a majority against the fascists, nor an anti-fascist united front with the Social Democrats to defend against the Nazi dictatorship and thus to prevent war. Which, with all due respect, wasn't just the fault of the communists. But sorry, back to the CDU. As far as I know, before the end of the war, Stalin decreed that four parties should be re-established immediately after the surrender: the KPD, the SPD, and for the bourgeoisie and followers, the Liberal Democratic Party

Party and, in succession to the former Catholic Center Party, the CDU. Legation Councilor Tömmmler<sup>1</sup>, who had met Lenin during his time in Petersburg, was given the task. He was supposed to advise the former center politician Andreas Hermes<sup>2</sup>, whom the Red Army had freed from death row in Plötzensee, to revive the Center Party. However, Hermes believed that there were more Protestants than Catholics living in the Soviet-occupied zone and therefore proposed a "Christian-Democratic Union." This party name was approved in writing by Stalin. The paper is in Moscow. Then have

Tulpanow<sup>3</sup> and Tömmmler formulated the founding call of June 26, 1945. In July 1945, Hermes opened the "Reich Office of the CDU" in Berlin. Hermes subsequently became CDU chairman, second deputy mayor of Berlin and city councilor for nutrition. In December 1945, however, because of different opinions on land reform, he went to Bad Godesberg and joined the Adenauer CDU. There he soon found himself politically sidelined because he was against Western integration. At that time, the four parties formed the anti-fascist democratic bloc. The principle of commonality

was valid until the end of the GDR, so it had its roots there. That's the way it is. The parties did not fight against each other, as is the case in bourgeois capitalist society. It was about working together to overcome the rubble of the old society and to develop a new, different society. This collaboration was the reason for me to join the CDU in the first place, because I had experienced the terrible fights between the parties in the Weimar Republic as a child. This couldn't happen again. Was the West CDU a secession

or founding an independent party?

In the western occupation zones, Christian-democratic party groups formed independently of one another; this lasted until 1947, which is why the CDU (West) does not have a founding date. There was one in the week before Christmas 1945 "Reich meeting" of these groups in Bad Godesberg. The presentation by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation states: "From this point on, the name 'Union', as it was coined in Berlin and in the Soviet Zone, was adopted in the West." In other words: today's

Does the ruling party of the Federal Republic of Germany owe its name to Stalin?

I would not go so far. But of course there is a certain historical context. I believe that the eastern name of the CDU was also adopted at that time in order to gain influence over the Christian Democrats in the SBZ. In any case, Konrad Adenauer's goal was to create a united Catholic defensive front in Western Europe against encroaching communism and later expand it to the East.

Have you ever met Adenauer?

That was on the 3rd Germany Day

Junge Union from August 12th to 15th, 1947 in Hamburg. The state chairmen were invited; I was the chairman of Saxony-Anhalt. Adenauer gave a private audience for the five state chairmen from the East. My comrades-in-arms chickened out; they feared trouble at home if they said they had chatted with the reactionary Adenauer. I had a good relationship with the cultural officer of the Soviet military administration responsible for us in Halle and was therefore not worried. So I was alone with Adenauer. He told me that he wasn't interested in the SBZ

I was more concerned about West Germany having a proper relationship with its neighbors to the west. And then he said, because he considered me a brother in Christ, that we should hold out in the East as long as we could. Because it seemed to him a foregone conclusion that the communist Soviets would ban us at some point.

Where did the conversation take place?

The conference took place in the Fährhaus, and Adenauer had a room there where I drank coffee alone with him.

What impression did he make on you?

He was already past 70 back then,

but seemed very determined and goal-oriented. In his eyes, I was some kind of exotic, coming from an area where he would never set foot voluntarily. But I won't hide the fact that he impressed me.

How did he treat you? From above?

Not at all, he treated me objectively and correctly, asked about the situation in the zone, but left no doubt that he would not officially enter into contact with the CDU in the East. He refused any conversation with Otto Nuschke<sup>4</sup>, the party chairman. But he clearly placed his faith in youth, in mine

Generation. That's why we had coffee and this cozy, not at all hostile conversation that lasted perhaps an hour.

Did you meet him again later?

No. We never had contact again. Not even in writing.

You had a good relationship with Walter Ulbricht.

You could say so. From the beginning he had trust in me and I in him. Immediately after 1945, we in the CDU spoke of "socialism based on Christian responsibility." Jakob Kaiser coined this term.

Ulbricht took me aside one day and said: "This is a wrong world. You talk about socialism while we talk about the anti-fascist democratic order.«

If you compare Ulbricht and Adenauer...

Somehow they were similar. Everyone would rather have half of Germany whole than half of all of Germany. And Adenauer wanted to make me a resistance fighter in the zone and Ulbricht a decent communist. I didn't become a communist, but I did become an ally of Walter Ulbricht.

This quote with "half of Germany as a whole" is attributed exclusively to Adenauer.

I told Ulbricht, who said with amusement: "That's good, he's right." Occasionally, back in the 1960s, we sat together at dinner after meetings in the State Council and spoke like normal people. He was always up for anecdotes. I had just come from Conakry in Guinea, where Sékou Touré had ruled since 1958, with whom we had quite good relations at the time. "A 38-year-old Negro from Equatorial Africa named Sékou Touré," it said in Spiegel 12/1960, »has to the two worthy grandfathers

of the West, Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, turned their noses. [...] The week before last, the Negro did something unheard of again: without caring about the Bonn threat that any recognition of the GDR would be punished with the utmost severity by the Federal Republic, Sékou Touré sent an ambassador to Pankow and snubbed Chancellor Adenauer." So it happened "Negro friend Lübke" (Spiegel 3/1962) emerged as the first Federal President "Africa tour" was sent, as the Hamburg news magazine reported. He was supposed to win back the favor of the apostates with generous gifts. Presented in Guinea

He took out a loan of 25 million DM to improve the water supply and promised to set up a training and model farm for meat processing, a research fishing cutter, three model smoking stations for fish, a mobile infirmary, a mobile veterinary station with a veterinarian paid by Bonn, a plant protection station with experts and – also free of charge – road construction specialists. Sékou Touré accepted this gratefully, but when greeting Lübke at the airport he asked why the President had taken off his beard ...

Is this a joke like the other sayings attributed to Lübke that the Spiegel editors came up with?

No, no joke, it wasn't in the mirror either. This is what they told me when I visited Conakry. Sékou Touré had consciously made this allusion to Ulbricht, although I wasn't even sure whether Lübke had understood it the way it was meant.

In any case, Ulbricht laughed a lot when I told him that.

Another time he had sent me to India as his special ambassador. He did this occasionally to make international contacts. Also

He once sent me to the Vatican. In India I visited the governor in Bombay, where the GDR had had a foreign trade office since 1954. In front of the governor's palace, a band greeted me with the "Deutschlandlied". I tacitly rated it as a "German folk song". Inside, the old, venerable governor finally asked me: "Your Excellency, how is His Majesty?" I assumed that by "His Majesty" he meant our Chairman of the State Council, because who else would he mean by that, and said diplomatically and politely: "Good, very good, thank you for asking." In the course of

During the conversation, however, I realized that he didn't mean Walter, but Wilhelm. I came from the other side of the world and he believed that the emperor was still alive. However, I didn't correct him, especially since I had previously confirmed that "Your Majesty" was still on good terms. – His Majesty was amused when I reported this to him after my return to Berlin.

When did you first interact with Walter Ulbricht?

That was still in Halle, in the 1940s, when I was state chairman of the Junge Union. I had called for this in the Neuer Weg, which was the daily newspaper of the state CDU

to stop class struggle. Ulbricht had obviously read the article; at least he discussed it at a conference in Halle where he presented the two-year plan. This young CDU friend, he said, was wrong, the class struggle was far from over. And after the conference there was a detailed but friendly instruction. Ulbricht always had a close heart with Christians to work together in circles. Later he called me to him and gave me the sermons of the military chaplain Friedrich, who had been taken prisoner, that had been broadcast on the Moscow radio during the war.

Wilhelm Krummacker. He suggested publishing these - of course after consulting with Krummacker, who had been bishop in Greifswald since 1955.

Ulbricht told me that he had been running around Moscow for weeks trying to get a cross for Krummacher. There were only double crosses of the Russian Orthodox Church. – Krummacher later showed me this cross that Ulbricht had provided and talked about how the communists treated it with respect.

The bloc policy occasionally developed cracks, as there were cracks within the CDU leadership in the run-up to the first Volkskammer elections in October 1950

Conflicts. At that time you were already general secretary of the CDU.

Well, our party leader Otto Nuschke initially didn't want a common electoral list of National Front candidates. Only over my corpse, he had explained at two appearances in Thuringia. Nuschke, who had been a member of the Weimar National Assembly in 1919 and of the Prussian state parliament until 1933 - as general secretary of the German State Party (DDP) - and, like Ulbricht, was now deputy prime minister, obviously expected himself to have opportunities to become prime minister of the GDR and more

become. The Stalin-Beria line, which became visible in the Soviet notes of March 1952, amounted to a neutral, united Germany. The 67-year-old Otto believed that he could improve his chances by distancing himself a little from SED politics. However, I myself promoted the joint list in the regional associations. Then the block parties met and Nuschke spoke up; everyone was excited to see what he would say.

And he declared, completely surprisingly: Yes, he would be very much in favor of candidates from all parties running on a common list.

That's why he has his Secretary General,

So I am instructed to argue accordingly in the regional associations. – As I was leaving, Ulbricht poked me in the side and said:

"Well, you gave me the wrong information." And he blinked at me.

To what do you attribute Nuschke's sudden change of heart?

I think that the Soviets, probably Semyonov<sup>5</sup>, had talked to him. He listened to them.

What was Ulbricht's relationship with you and Nuschke?

He respected and respected Otto Nuschke, and he liked me. He sent me

often as his special ambassador to heads of state around the world.

On June 17, 1953, Otto Nuschke, deputy prime minister of the GDR, was deported to West Berlin. Do you remember that, did you have anything to do with it?

Yes, but that has nothing to do with Walter Ulbricht, I clarified that with Semyonov.

Tell me.

We were sitting in the party executive committee on Jägerstrasse when a call came that Otto Nuschke should come to a government meeting that began at 3 p.m.

It should be in there somewhere

Niederschöneweide will take place. At around 2 p.m. Otto was driven to Treptow in a small F 9, was recognized on Mühlenstrasse not far from the Oberbaum Bridge and the driver was forced by the crowds to drive to Kreuzberg, i.e. to the British sector. The car was stopped in front of police station 109, the second driver - an employee of the CDU main board - fled back across the border and called me. As I later learned from Nuschke himself, both the British and the Americans approached him there and asked him to stay in the West. The Americans wanted him right away

flew out and offered him a six-figure sum "for his memoirs," which he should write in the States. The family will be brought over. Nuschke protested and demanded to be returned to the GDR. This is his political home. The RIAS conducted an interview with him, which we heard on the radio and understood as his message that, firstly, he was being held against his will and, secondly, he wanted to return. I registered with the Soviet High Commissioner Semyonov for an interview and asked him to intervene with his colleague in the Allied Control Council.

so that Nuschke could come back. Semyonov asked with a laugh: Does he even want that? I found that a little strange. But the Russian clarified this with the other side. Some time later I received a call asking me to come to the Oberbaum Bridge. From the opposite side, a US major accompanied by Nuschke, followed by a press crowd, walked over and asked if I was authorized to speak to Mr.

To receive Nuschke, which I said yes. Then I had to acknowledge in writing that as general secretary of the CDU I had taken over as chairman of the CDU. We then drove in my car to Jägerstrasse, where he

first had a proper breakfast.

It is claimed that Nuschke was not kidnapped at all, but went to West Berlin voluntarily. This is nonsense. If he had then Radio protested against his kidnapping and demanded his return to the GDR? His wife was having lunch with us - we lived in an apartment in the party executive committee on Jägerstrasse at the time - when the radio interview was broadcast. No, there was no doubt that Nuschke absolutely wanted to return to the GDR.

Nuschke enjoyed in the Soviet

Leadership high reputation?

You could say that. I remember February 23, 1956, Otto Nuschke's 73rd birthday. He was taking a cure in Barwysa near Moscow, and it wasn't just Ulbricht and other German comrades who had just come to the XX. Not only were there not only the party conference in the city to congratulate the sanatorium, but also well-known CPSU officials, as I was pleased to discover at the time. Two days later, after the end of the party conference, the Soviets gave an evening reception in honor of the Deputy Prime Minister of the GDR. The mood was sombre, Khrushchev had his secret speech

held, but we knew nothing about it. But atmospherically you could feel that something wasn't right. Deputy Prime Minister Anastas Mikojan paid tribute to Deputy Prime Minister Otto Nuschke with a warm-hearted, touching speech that also addressed the political relationship between the USSR and the GDR. Afterwards, Foreign Minister Vyacheslav Molotov stood up and said that it was the first decent speech he had heard that day... Only later did I realize what he meant by that. How do the CDU have the territorial changes, the new borders, such as the Oder-Neisse border

to Poland, discussed?

The party was divided. But that CDU member Georg Dertinger, as Foreign Minister, supported Ulbricht and Cyrankiewicz in Warsaw on 5/6. The declaration on the border was negotiated in June 1950 four weeks later

Signing the "Görlitz Agreement" contributed to clarification within the party. I spoke to Polish Catholic priests in Wrocław at the invitation of Pax Christi.

The GDR's recognition of the Oder-Neisse border was criticized by us in the West. Adenauer repeatedly commented on this, on June 6th.

October 1951 he declared in Berlin

on behalf of the federal government: "For us, the country beyond the Oder-Neisse belongs to Germany." Three days later, SPD leader Kurt Schumacher sounded the same revanchist horn: "The Social Democracy as the party that was the first party to make the indispensable claim as early as 1945 for reunification with these areas, we welcome the fact that official German foreign policy is committed to this goal." And Berlin's governing mayor Ernst Reuter (SPD) seconded: "Not just Berlin, Bonn and Stuttgart, also Leipzig and Dresden, Breslau, Stettin and Königsberg belong to Germany.

What was stolen from us will have to be given back."6

The fact is: Without the recognition of the border treaty concluded between the GDR and Poland in 1950, the Allies would not have given their consent to German unity in 1990. This GDR regulation, which is binding under international law, was included in the 2+4 Treaty. The GDR made a significant contribution to reconciliation with the Polish people, which is ignored today.

Did you have an influence on Ulbricht or did he have an influence on you?

It was a mutual give and take. In this context, just two small examples: At introduction

After the conscription in 1962, I talked to Ulbricht about the fact that even people who reject service with weapons out of Christian convictions should be given the opportunity not to have to violate this law if they followed their faith. As a result, the institution of "construction soldiers" emerged. I visited the first units a short time later in Neubrandenburg.

Another time I was with Ulbricht and talked to him about whether pensioners should travel to the West despite Bonn's refusal to recognize citizenship. He found this worth considering and then suggested

In order not to disturb the "bloc peace" through jealousies from other parties, it was not the CDU, but rather Thuringia's regional bishop Moritz Mitzenheim who should make this proposal public. That's how it happened. Ulbricht also accepted my request to keep Good Friday free of work. The bloc parties had much more influence in the GDR than some people want to believe today.

There were repeated confidential one-on-one conversations between Walter Ulbricht and you. Even after the 13th August 1961, I heard.

I came from Lambaréné on August 15th, where I was on behalf of Walter Ulbricht

delivered a personal letter to Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer and awarded the jungle doctor an honorary doctorate from Humboldt University. Schweitzer reacted exuberantly and gave me mail for Walter Ulbricht. During the stopover in Paris it was said that there was civil war and chaos in the GDR, and a FRG diplomat suggested that I should fly to Cologne-Bonn instead of Berlin. Deputy Foreign Minister Sepp Schwab picked me up in Schönefeld and informed me about the events on August 13th; I took the rest from the newspapers he had brought with him.

Among other things, I read that the CDU had also approved the border security measures in the name of Gerald Götting.

I drove straight to the meeting of the State Council in the city center, which was very short, because Ulbricht only informed about the measures that had been taken on behalf of the Warsaw contracting states on the sector border with West Berlin and on the western state border with the Federal Republic of Germany.

Afterwards, already outside the meeting room, I pointed out to Ulbricht that I had not been in the country at all, which I agreed with him

I understood that I had neither been asked for consent nor could I have given it. Ulbricht paused and then said: "Are you against it?" Of course I wasn't.

Then he said again: "Well, you see, then everything is fine."

Because the session ended early, his car wasn't there yet and he asked me if I could give him a ride. I wanted to join the party headquarters, which wasn't in Pankow, where Ulbricht had to go. Niederschönhausen Palace had been the official residence of the State Council since 1960; the State Council building on Marx-Engels-Platz was only completed in 1964. But

After all, I could hardly tell Ulbricht: No, I'm going in a different direction. So he got in my car.

Oh, he began, Khrushchev had given him something nice. According to Ulbricht, on August 1st, before the meeting of the Political Advisory Committee in Moscow, he had a conversation with Khrushchev in which, among other things, the Berlin question was discussed.<sup>7</sup> He explained the current situation to him, whereupon Khrushchev declared that the GDR should control the border better. Two weeks earlier he, Ulbricht, had received an in-house message from Paul Verner,

the Berlin party leader, who had learned from Karpin, an employee in the Moscow Central Committee responsible for German issues, that the Soviet leadership still did not know how to deal with this problem.

He, Ulbricht, was all the more surprised when Khrushchev declared in a large gathering with all the alliance's top people that Comrade Ulbricht had just suggested that a wall be built around West Berlin. Ulbricht told me on the drive to Pankow that he was thunderstruck. He had never made such a suggestion.

However, it was difficult for him to stand up in this round and contradict or even deny Khrushchev. And he would hardly have been able to make this public outside the Kremlin.

I saw that Ulbricht's dismay was genuine and not at all faked. But he was not just a party soldier, but also an alliance partner. Khrushchev appreciated this. It saddens me that the zeitgeist distorts the actual connections and untruthfully blames Ulbricht alone for the construction of the wall.

You were one of Ulbricht's deputies in the State Council. How did it come

in addition?

After Pieck's death, hardly anyone expected a "collective head of state." The formation of the State Council was the logical continuation of the Democratic Bloc's policy. In 1960, a new democratic development began under Ulbricht. All parties and also non-party citizens were invited to participate. We also had the right to introduce bills. As the first man in the leading party, Ulbricht respected the different opinions of the CDU, the DBD, the LDPD and the NDPD. He therefore suggested that their representatives become deputies of the

became Chairman of the State Council.

Wasn't that a formal question?

Not at all. We actually had influence and were not "recorders," as we were later derogatorily called. When Ulbricht was once unable to attend a State Council meeting himself, he commissioned me to chair the meeting - he could also have chosen a deputy from the SED. When Volkskammer President Johannes Dieckmann (LDPD) died in 1969 and this position had to be filled, he invited the chairmen of the block parties to discuss the successor. Everyone assumed that Manfred Gerlach, the LDPD

Chairman, it would be. But to everyone's astonishment, Ulbricht explained that the office was not a hereditary position and suggested me.

How did you interpret this vote? Were you scared, delighted, unsettled?

A bit of everything. On the other hand: Why shouldn't I be able to jump over my shadow?

Ulbricht could do it too. There

For example, there was this presentation of the NVA uniforms. It was difficult for me and many of my party friends to even accept the idea of forming national armed forces, but Ulbricht convinced us of the necessity

convince. And after we swallowed that, he led us into a room where the uniforms were on display. Oh God, I said loudly, they look like Wehrmacht! Then Ulbricht: Would you prefer Russian uniforms? – Awkward silence all around. The man who fought alongside the Red Army against the fascist army, who was an internationalist, was at the same time more German than many had given him credit for.

You occasionally vacationed with your family in the guest house of the Council of Ministers in Dierhagen on the Darß. They were there too

Ulbricht's?

Yes. They moved completely normally, walked on the beach and talked to people.

Angela Merkel thinks she remembers that the beach was cordoned off.



Nonsense. It was open to everyone and there were no barriers. The Soviet Minister of Education, Yekaterina Furtseva, once came to my wife and me, both insecure and indignant, and was outraged that she had been walking on the beach and suddenly came across many naked people. You have to do something about it, it would be forbidden to expose yourself in public.

No, we reassured them, in the GDR it was allowed for people to show how God created them. That's called nudism, nudist culture, and it's completely normal. She didn't understand that. Walter and Lotte marched past there, it didn't bother them.

Since we are already talking about the current CDU chairwoman: She made attempts to integrate the history of the eastern CDU into the history of the western CDU.

There were inquiries from the Konrad Adenauer Foundation about this, they wanted to have my estate. But it seemed to me that they were very selective with it

To deal with this, I preferred to send my documents to the state archives in Halle.

When was the last time you saw and spoke to Walter?

That was after that terrible accident when the IL-62 crashed near Königs Wusterhausen in the summer of 1972. I gave the speech for the 156 victims and shook his hand at the memorial service. At the time, none of us had any idea that we wouldn't see each other again. Ulbricht's death shocked me. It wasn't just a loss for the GDR. I also lost a reliable political friend. He had respected my Christian worldview.

Ulbricht saw the similarities between Marxists and Christians and did a lot to ensure that this could be experienced in everyday life. Legation Councilor Tömmmler was a representative of the German embassy in St. Petersburg before the First World War and was also later committed to the development of relations between Germany and Soviet Russia, for which Lenin personally thanked him. In post-war Germany he ran an interpreting office for the Soviet military administration, which later became a company that he ultimately sold to the VOB Union for reasons of age.

Tömmmler was close friends with Otto Nuschke.

Andreas Hermes (1878-1964), holds a doctorate

Farmer, from 1930 to 1933 President of the Reich Association of German Agricultural Cooperatives

Raiffeisen and from 1928 to 1933 President of the Association of German Farmers' Associations, renamed in 1931 to the Association of German Christian Farmers' Associations. After the Nazi Enabling Act, he resigned from his positions and his Reichstag mandate. Hermes became Reich Minister for Food and Agriculture in 1920, and from October 1921 to August 1923 he headed the Reich Ministry of Finance. From 1924 to 1928 he was a member of the Prussian state parliament and from 1928 to 1933 also a member of the Reichstag. After imprisonment, he emigrated to South America in 1936, returned in 1939, was arrested after July 20, 1944 (he was intended to be Minister of Agriculture in a Goerdeler government) and sentenced to death on January 11, 1945. After the liberation, founded the CDU in the Soviet occupation zone, resigned as party chairman in December 1945 because of the land reform

back, went to Bonn. From 1948 to 1955 he was President of the German Farmers' Association and until 1961 also of the German Raiffeisen Association of the Western Zones and subsequently in the Federal Republic of Germany. Since Hermes opposed the integration of the Federal Republic of Germany into the West, he became more and more politically sidelined.

Sergei I. Tulpanov (1901-1984),

Career officer, 1927 CPSU. From 1941 to 1945 he was head of the political department on various sectors of the front. From October 1945 to September 1949 he headed the propaganda and information department of the SMAD with the rank of colonel. In this role he had many contacts with politicians from the KPD, SPD and (from 1946) SED, especially Walter Ulbricht. He then taught as a major general at the Leningrad Naval Academy, and after 1957 as a civilian university lecturer at the University of

Leningrad.

Otto Nuschke (1883-1957), trained printer, worked as a journalist since 1902, co-founder of the German Democratic Party (DDP) in 1918, deputy Reich chairman in the 1920s, co-founder of the Reichsbanner Schwarz-Red-Gold, which was loyal to the republic, and general secretary of the German State Party since 1931 renamed DDP. In the Goerdeler government after the successful assassination attempt on Hitler, he was appointed head of radio, illegal since July 20, 1944. In 1945 he co-founded the CDU in the SBZ. On the III. Elected party chairman at the 1948 party conference. In March 1948, together with Wilhelm Pieck (SED) and Wilhelm Külz (LDPD), he became chairman of the German People's Council, which drafted the constitution of the GDR. In 1949 he first became a member of the Provisional People's Chamber

GDR. He then belonged to the People's Chamber until his death. From 1949 to 1957 Deputy Prime Minister of the GDR.

Vladimir S. Semyonov (1911-1992), diplomat, 1940 embassy councilor in Berlin, 1944/45 entrusted with post-war planning for Germany, from 1946 to 1953 political advisor to the Soviet military administration under Vasily Sokolovsky and Vasily Chuikov. In June 1953, after the dissolution of the Soviet Control Commission, he became head of the USSR High Commission in Germany. In September of the same year he was appointed Soviet ambassador to the GDR. In 1978, Semyonov was appointed Soviet ambassador to the Federal Republic of Germany in Bonn, succeeding Valentin Falin. He retired in 1986 and was succeeded by Julij Kwizinskij.

Quoted from: What was stolen, in: Spiegel 15/1959

See: "Attunement: The Situation in the GDR 1961," in: Heinz Keßler/Fritz Streletz, Without the Wall there would have been war, Berlin 2011, pp. 9-38. Werner Eberlein interpreted the conversation between Ulbricht and Khrushchev; Ulbricht's handwritten notes are in his estate in the Federal Archives in Berlin-Zehlendorf, and the Soviet protocols are available in Moscow. On December 12, 2001, Eberlein reflects on this conversation and its extensions:

»Nobody thought that a wall would be built. It should be cordoned off with a few rolls of barbed wire, a few passages would be made and every decent German would go to the People's Police, get a visa issued and use it to cross the border. When Ulbricht said in a press conference shortly before the Wall was built:

We have no intention of building a wall, our construction workers are there for other things, it is now assumed that he said that to distract. I think he was convinced of what he said, that was his honest opinion, because it had been negotiated in Moscow." (see "Berlin-Moscow-Berlin. Werner Eberlein in conversation with Joachim Heise and Marianne Regensburger «, in: Life and Berlin - with and without the wall. Conversations and reflections, Verlag am park, Berlin 2003, p. 125)

root

Elfriede Leymann

"Westpakete" by Walter Ulbricht's sister Hildegard

Elfriede Leymann, born in 1928, born and raised in Leipzig, attended the Workers' and Farmers' Faculty in 1946/47, studied law at the University of Leipzig until 1950, then worked at the Academy for State and Law in Potsdam-Babelsberg until 1964, then at the Humboldt University of Berlin in the Law Section, since 1976

Associate professor in the field of administrative law. 1988 Retirement

I heard the name "Ulbricht" often in the early 1930s. My father Rudolf Eichhorn then spoke about Erich Ulbricht, the friend of his older brother Herbert. It was also mentioned in passing that this Erich had an older brother named Walter, who was a member of the Reichstag in Berlin.

I only found out that there was a sister in a letter from the USA. My uncle Herbert was amazed: "Isn't it a strange coincidence that all three siblings, Hilda, Walter

and Erich, the youngest, all retired in the same year?" All three Ulbrichts died in 1973.

Herbert Eichhorn and Erich Ulbricht met in Leipzig during their training as bandagists, now known as orthopedic craftsmen. Herbert Eichhorn was, as he wrote in March 1984, "a weekly visitor to the old master tailor Ulbricht and his family." After their journeyman examination in the years of inflation, Herbert Eichhorn and Erich Ulbricht found work neither in Leipzig nor elsewhere in Germany. My father often said that both of them considered moving to the Soviet Union

to emigrate. But unexpected difficulties arose. Therefore, Herbert applied for entry into the USA in 1922, where distant relatives vouched for him. So in October 1925 he boarded a ship to New York. In March 1926 his wife Elisabeth, my aunt, followed him. He soon found solid ground under his feet there and had a decent job. And so "I helped my former apprentice and workmate Erich Ulbricht come here," he reported to me in that letter. In 1928 he was able to welcome him and his wife Erna to New York. Both remained close throughout their lives - as friends

as well as sought-after specialists for various types of orthopedic items.

My father talked about this repeatedly and sometimes passed around a photo of Erich Ulbricht when some former members of the Communist Youth Association met with their families in the early 1930s. On summer Sundays they rode their bikes - the offspring each in a child seat on their father's bike - to the Lübschitz ponds near Machern, east of Leipzig. In the winter they visited each other in turn, for example the Thiernigs (Arthur and Lene) in the Observatory Street

Meyer houses in Plagwitz (the

"big Marthl" and her husband), my parents in Leipzig-Schönefeld, later in Elisenstrasse in the southern suburb.

"Little Marthl" Biller and her Gerhard lived very close to us, on Scharnhorststrasse.

In 1932, at the hand of my grandmother, I met Ulbricht's parents. This must have been after Grandma's first visit to the USA. Of course, she met Erich and Erna Ulbricht there and - I suspect today - carried messages, gifts and perhaps money from them as a courier. Our visit to Ulbricht's was announced: the coffee was ready.

The old master tailor Ulbricht lived with his wife in the

"Naundörfchen." Behind the massive building of the main fire station on Fleischerplatz, we crossed a narrow bridge into a real village street, the kind I knew from visiting relatives on Marthastrasse in the east of Leipzig. Small, mostly single-story houses, many with half-timbering, were lined up in a row, the former Naundorf, which was previously located to the west outside the Leipzig city walls. It was a poor people's area.

This is how Luise Flavin, the daughter of Walter and Erich Ulbricht, described it

Sister Hildegard: »Grandpa's house, where he lived with his second wife, was behind a massive gate at the end of the street. The relatively closed area was also bordered by the gardens of the residential buildings on the side streets. And I remember the huge old trees that stood there."<sup>1</sup> Hildegard Ulbricht had obviously left Leipzig before her brother Erich. She married a committed trade unionist and gave birth to her daughter Luise in Königs Wusterhausen near Berlin in 1932. As a child, Luise often stayed with them, as she later reported to Lotte Ulbricht

Grandparents in Leipzig. That was for her  
"Naundörfchen" like a home.

Neither they (nor I) noticed back then that this place was said to have been a so-called prostitute's district and a disreputable area. A few months after my visit to the "Naundörfchen" in the spring of 1933, I met Erich Ulbricht himself. He visited my parents in Leipzig-Schönefeld with his wife Erna and daughter Ellinor, who was about my age. For me as a five-year-old, this was an extraordinary event, as they came from the distant and, for me, wonderful America, which my grandmother told me about after her first

had said a lot about the trip. From the adults' conversations, I remember that Erich Ulbricht had to stay in Leipzig longer than planned because he had lost his passport.

My father later spoke of this repeatedly and speculated that this loss at that time could not have been accidental. The Nazis were in power, and Erich's brother - Walter Ulbricht - was already wanted.

Father Ernst Ulbricht had been dismissed as a tailor and was essentially held jointly liable. My father, who was a worker at the time, was probably at Erich's instigation

Leipzig Telegraph Construction Office, measuring and sewing a pair of trousers at home for the first and last time in his life in the summer of 1933. I remember the master tailor Ernst Ulbricht as a medium-sized, narrow, somewhat stooped, very quiet man. Arthur Thiemig and other former members of the Communist Youth Association in Leipzig who knew my father also came to buy new, tailor-made trousers in solidarity with the unemployed Ernst Ulbricht.

In the pre-war years my uncle Herbert Eichhorn rarely mentioned Erich Ulbricht in his letters,

regardless of their close connection. It will probably have been omitted for security reasons.

After the World War, from which my father did not return, this connection to the USA became very noticeable for my mother and me. Since 1946 we regularly received so-called care packages from the USA from my uncle. These were duty free. After the GDR was founded in 1949, customs duties were levied. We had to get by on my mother's meager earnings as a cleaner and my 150 mark scholarship. When we told Herbert Eichhorn this, he came up with a trick: from then on he sent his

Relief deliveries to a Hildegard Niendorf in Bad Seegeberg. That was in Schleswig-Holstein and the Federal Republic. She did not have to pay any customs duty, and postal traffic between the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR was also duty-free. Now we and other relatives and acquaintances of Uncle Herbert in the GDR received the programs intended for us in this way. Although I always thanked her, I never received a response, which surprised me. Almost fifty years later I found out that this Hildegard Niendorf in Bad Seegeberg was the sister of Erich and Walter

Ulbricht was. She probably had her reasons for behaving a little conspiratorially towards us. Genex2 later took over this task. Uncle Herbert sent dollars at Christmas and birthdays, and in return we received gifts from Karl-Marx-Stadt.

Uncle Herbert Eichhorn died in the USA in 1987, when he was just over 80. We last saw each other in Berlin in 1966, when he visited us in Berlin with his wife. The connection was broken when I – like all employees at the Humboldt University, where I was head of the administrative law department at the time – made a written commitment to not do anything

to maintain contacts with capitalist foreign countries. I signed because I assumed that the correspondence with Herbert through my mother would continue without any problems, which she did. Mother had lived in our house since I married. My husband, who worked in the Central Committee apparatus, was also affected by this restrictive measure.

We noticed that this was also extended to mother when her brother-in-law invited her to visit the USA. She was of retirement age so could go to NSW3. She was not given permission to leave the country.

Uncle Herbert saw the termination of the correspondence as my own decision that affected him personally. I didn't feel able to explain the situation to him; it wasn't just incomprehensible to him.

In 1983 he wrote to my mother asking whether there was any way "to bridge the political ideas that divide us so monstrously. Even the three Ulbricht siblings came to an agreement on their deathbed and shook hands warmly."

In fact, Sister Hildegard from Bad Seegeberg visited her older brother Walter Ulbricht in 1973 shortly before his death in the GDR. Whether Erich too

It is not known whether Ulbricht was in Germany at the time.<sup>4</sup>

From: "Lotte and Walter", edited by Frank Schumann, Berlin 2003, p. 242

Genex was founded by government order on December 20, 1956 as "Gift Service and Small Exports GmbH". There, goods, most of which came from GDR production, could be purchased and given away for foreign currency. The offer was aimed primarily at FRG citizens who wanted to make friends with their relatives, but also at GDR citizens who worked abroad - including in socialist countries. Above all, high-quality consumer goods were offered.

Non-socialist monetary and economic area

See: "Lotte and Walter"..., op. cit., p. 239

Elfriede Brüning

In 1933 he came to us almost every day

Elfriede Brüning, born in 1910, joined the KPD and the League of Proletarian-Revolutionary Writers at the end of the 1920s. She was imprisoned by the Nazis in 1935. After the war she worked for newspapers and magazines and has lived in Berlin as a freelance writer since 1950. To date, she has published 28 books.

Your father was a carpenter and your mother a seamstress, and at some point you were fired because the workshop collapsed during the Great Depression.

Yes, that was a problem because not only were we on the street, but also our furniture. The comrades helped. One took the cupboard home, another chairs and table, a third the sofa... And then they got us an apartment in Moabit. It had three exits, one door to the street, one in the hallway and the third led to the courtyard. This, I only realized later, was calculated. This meant you could cross the yard unnoticed if necessary

flee if the police came in front.

Calculation by whom?

Well, from whom? By Walter Ulbricht. He was also the party's quartermaster at the time. At the beginning of 1933 we were asked whether our comrades could occasionally meet in our back room, to which my father said: Of course, you helped us with the furniture back then, now we'll help you. I also have to add that not a single piece of the furniture was missing when we moved in there.

They brought everything back.

And who came like that?

The entire party leadership. Pieck, Ulbricht, I believe that Thälmann was also there at one point; as we know, he was arrested on March 3, 1933. I didn't know most of them. My father had set up a workshop in the basement, and at the first meeting the hatch was open. Pieck saw the workbench and said to my father: Well, colleague. Whereupon my father, who was extremely short-sighted and therefore did not recognize Pieck, called from below: Are you a carpenter too? I was one, said Pieck.

And what are you doing now? asked my father again. Now I'm a glue traveler? So representatives, it came from the basement. Does that nourish you?

Well, that's okay, said Pieck and laughed.

And Ulbricht?

He came almost every day and met with random people. That lasted until the fall, after which he stayed away. As I learned after the war, he had been sent to France by the party.

The Gestapo put him out on a wanted list on March 1st and the party was banned.

That also explains the high level of conspiracy. That's why our shop apartment with the three exits. Everything was really well thought out.

The Nazis never are either

got behind it.

But you were arrested.

But not because of that. We had a traitor in our group. We regularly contributed texts to the Neue Deutsche Blätter, an exile magazine published in Prague. And he reported to the Gestapo about a meeting we had in Grunewald. That's why I was sent to the Barnimstrasse women's prison in 1935, where I wrote my novel "Young Heart Must Wander," non-political entertainment literature. The treason trial ended with an acquittal, they really didn't know anything, and my harmless writing in the cell is a thing

have done the rest.

What was Ulbricht like?

To me he seemed somehow aloof, almost repellent. Unlike Pieck, who was always friendly and courteous. Ulbricht always seemed very focused and strained. Well, he was a member of the Reichstag and head of the Berlin-Brandenburg-Lausitz- Grenzmark KPD district; the party was banned and political work was illegal, so it was extremely dangerous. This wasn't the time to joke. But still. An aura of aloofness always surrounded him.

Will you have it later?

addressed?

When later"?

After the war, during GDR times. After all, you received the Patriotic Order of Merit in all three levels...

He was already dead by then.

Allow me to disagree. In 1960 there was the VVO in bronze. Didn't he lend it?

No, I think I got it from Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl, not from Walter.

So I asked again: Did you ever talk to Walter Ulbricht about 1933?

No. I never spoke to Ulbricht again after 1933. It just didn't happen. And now he's been dead for forty years and I'm over a hundred.

Heinz Kessler

I got to know him in the camp in 1941 as an anti-fascist

Heinz Keßler, born in 1920, Red Young Pioneer, member of the German Communist Youth Association, Wehrmacht soldier, joined the Soviet Army in 1941, sentenced to death by the Reich Court Martial. The verdict has not been overturned to this day. Front representative of the National Committee "Free Germany". Since that time

friends with Walter Ulbricht. Co-founder of the FDJ, member of the party executive committee and the central committee of the SED from 1946 to 1989, member of the People's Chamber

until 1990, member of the Politburo of the SED Central Committee since 1986, leading role in the development of the GDR's armed forces, most recently Minister for National Defense of the GDR, army general.

Heinz, at over ninety years old you are a witness of the century. You know Walter Ulbricht from Soviet emigration, having him as a co-founder of the National Committee in 1943

You experienced »Free Germany« and were like that

Activist from the very beginning, when he helped organize the new life in Berlin in 1945, knew him from the unification party conference, was with him continuously since 1946 on the party executive committee and the central committee of the SED and you have him as your superior in the National Defense Council of the GDR and at the same time as Experienced by a family friend. If you were to characterize him in a few words – what would you highlight?

For me he stands in a row with Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, Ernst Thälmann and Wilhelm Pieck. He was a trade unionist for over sixty years

and a communist for almost as long. In this respect, for me he embodies good traditions of the German and international workers' movement. He was a learner throughout his life, developed from a carpenter to a statesman, and was a creative Marxist. He had character. You could rely on his word. He was a person with strengths, weaknesses and edges. A role model for me.

When did you first meet him?

That was in the late summer of 1941 in Camp 27 in Krasnogorsk, 27 kilometers west of Moscow. Three people questioned me there. One was Rudolf

Lindau<sup>1</sup>, the other introduced herself as Lotte Kühn, and the third was Walter Ulbricht. For the first time since my desertion from the Nazi Wehrmacht in Belarus a few weeks ago, I met German emigrants. They wanted to know from me what the mood was among the Germans. I could tell that my judgment didn't really satisfy them, not to say: it displeased them. I said that the vast majority of Germans had fallen for fascist ideology.

Soldiers, non-commissioned officers and officers followed their leader unconditionally; it was illusory to believe that anything would change in the foreseeable future. Most soldiers kept the war

against the Soviet Union was even justified. They then asked why I defected. Because, I said, my mother, who was convinced of communism like my father, had told me along the way: Everyone makes mistakes. But please never make a mistake: do not allow yourself to be sent into an imperialist war of aggression against the Soviet Union. The fact that I took this advice to heart resulted in her being put in a concentration camp by the Nazis. Only later did I find out that she had to suffer in Ravensbrück from 1941 to 1945.

How did your first conversation with Ulbricht go?

He asked me what I had in mind for the near future. I answered without hesitation that I wanted to help end the war, in whatever way, in whatever place, including directly at the front if possible.

Ulbricht smiled in his familiar way and said that was very welcome, but impossible at the moment. The military and political situation is too difficult and too confusing. I knew that the German advance continued unbroken on all sectors of the front, that strong German troop formations were marching on Moscow and would soon be in front of the capital. So I should wait,

I would certainly be informed about my tasks in good time. So we parted.

A few weeks later, in September, Franz Gold<sup>2</sup>, a Bohemian communist who had defected just a few days before, and I were called to the camp management. These three were waiting for us there again. This time, however, Walter Ulbricht took the floor. The

military and economic situation in and around Moscow has not become easier, but rather even more complicated, he said. The decisive battle to defend the capital and thus the Soviet Union is imminent. Be it

It was necessary to transport the prisoners of war who had now been brought together here near the front into the deep hinterland. He asked me and Franz Gold whether we would be willing to help set up such a camp at a new location - wherever that would be. There we were not only supposed to support the Soviet camp management, but also carry out anti-fascist persuasion among the prisoners of war.

We then wanted to transfer our experiences to other camps. This, Ulbricht explained to us, is not only necessary to maintain discipline and improve life

To make camp somewhat bearable. It is also about the prisoners of war understanding that they had fallen victim to criminal propaganda and politics and should draw conclusions from this for their own lives. For them, the war was over, they had survived - and they had to give this life a new meaning. Even if they only made up for the damage they had caused in the Soviet Union by working properly: in the forests, in mines, in production plants.

Ulbricht argued coherently and convincingly, and I liked him right from the start because

because he was a Saxon like me: He came from Leipzig, I from Chemnitz.

Gold and I were willing to do this in principle, even if we would have preferred to fight actively at the front.

What happened then?

The relocation of Camp No. 27 began just a few days later. Like thousands of other prisoners, we were locked in wagons that were far too small for the large number of people. The air soon became stuffy, it was dark, and only a few cracks let in light from outside. The journey was physically and mentally terrible, but I understood that. hundreds of thousands,

At the same time, if not millions of Soviet people were evacuated to the East, taken out of the future combat zone, tens of thousands of industrial plants were dismantled, relocated and rebuilt in the safety of Siberia and Central Asia. An incredible logistical achievement. The prisoners of war were basically ballast and useless eaters. And yet they cared about us and for us. It was not like on the German side, where - as we know today - around 3.3 million of the approximately 5.7 million Red Army prisoners of war were systematically killed through hunger, epidemics, exploitation and executions

came to death. After the Jews, the Red Army soldiers were the largest group of victims of the fascist dictatorship.<sup>3</sup>

How long were you traveling?

After three weeks we reached Karaganda. Every day on the way we were given a piece of bread, a cup of tea with a small piece of sugar and now and then a small slice of bacon.

We fell out of the train carriages and marched through the steppe for several hours. Then we reached a tiny camp. The barracks weren't enough, we had to build more.

At first we slept in the open air and felt the cold at night. The work was very

heavy, the hunger - with only 250 grams of bread a day and an occasional bowl of thin soup that was hardly filling - was painful. Of course, it wasn't easy to explain to the other prisoners that the Russians had to live on the same small rations. In addition, we were hit by a wave of typhoid fever, which also affected my new friend Franz Gold. I became a brigadier and had to ensure order and discipline at work and also settle disputes. There were fights and attacks as well as theft of comrades among the irritable prisoners of war.

At the end of November, the wind swept over

As the steppe drove sand and snow into our faces, working with axes and saws and unwieldy wooden poles became increasingly difficult. We often had to stop work to warm up, even if it was just by beating our arms vigorously. Then a man came towards us, obviously from the camp management staff, certainly not a prisoner, but a Russian or emigrant, because he was wearing civilian clothes: a thick sheepskin coat, a "schapka", the typical fur hat, and "walenki", the warm ones Felt boots. I said that the cold today was particularly bad and unnerving. Then he threw one at me

Sentence to the head that made me angry - he probably didn't think anything of it, maybe he thought it was funny, he outraged me. He said: "If I worked as slowly as you, I would also be shivering with frost."

I shot back: "If I had a coat, a shapka and walenki like you," I pointedly emphasized the "you," "then I would definitely work faster. And if you don't have anything more to say to me than this, then leave me alone!" Fine, fine, he said, apologized and invited me to his office, perhaps something could be done to make things easier

Do work under these conditions.

The man's name was Heinz Hoffmann<sup>4</sup>, but he called himself "Roth" here. He was a communist from Mannheim who had fought against Franco outside Madrid and was seriously wounded there, then came to Moscow where he did political work. He was then ordered to Karaganda together with another interbrigadist, Herbert Grünstein<sup>5</sup>. We became good friends; Hoffmann was my boss and predecessor as Defense Minister for many years.

At the same time, we were in the camp in the Kazakh steppes under certainly difficult conditions

Soviet prisoners of war were also interned in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp. The first gassing cars were tested on them in October 1941, and typhus also killed them during this time. And those who survived were led to execution night after night. By mid-November, around 18,000 Red Army soldiers had died in Sachsenhausen alone, around 15,000 of whom were shot in the neck.

Did you see Ulbricht again during that difficult time?

Yes, he came to us from Moscow in December together with Arthur Pieck<sup>6</sup> and Hans Mahle<sup>7</sup>. The group announced as a delegation of the KPD from Moscow

wanted to see whether there were experiences here that could also be used in other camps and celebrate Christmas with us. The big difficulty that no one had thought of before was getting a Christmas tree. In Kazakhstan, in the vast steppe, few if any trees grew, but no fir trees. To this day I still don't know what adventurous ways I managed to create fir trees. In any case – the Christmas party with Walter Ulbricht in the steppe took place with a tree.

At the end of the visit, Ulbricht made a thorough evaluation. He found that these

emigrants (Heinz Hoffmann, Herbert Grünstein and others) and a number of Antifa activists (including Franz Gold and me) have done a decent job so far. There is a camp activity, circles and working groups. Ulbricht asked us if we wanted to go to school again. In January 1942, the first Antifa school would begin operations in Oranki, south of Gorki on the middle Volga. It was, as we would say today, a pilot project with the aim of initially gathering experience over the course of four or five months in order to then use it for the larger number of schools planned later.

What did that mean?

Erich Weinert<sup>8</sup>, who later dealt with the allegations, was in the Soviet Antifa schools

"Brainwashing" was carried out, the prisoners of war would be there

"indoctrinated" and brought "into line," explained even before the opening of the school in Oranki: "It is not the intention in these schools to put the students through a so-called worldview mill, so that on the one hand there is the unfinished human being and on the other the finished Marxist emerges from the other side. The purpose of the courses is to familiarize you with a method of thinking, with a

Method of investigation that experience has shown to provide the best insight into the background of the laws of motion in human society.«

The head of the school was the philosophy professor Nikolai Jantzen. The teaching staff included experienced politicians such as Rudolf Lindau (specialist in the history of the labor movement), Hermann Matern (for all questions of united and popular front politics), Edwin Hoernle (for questions of agricultural policy), Wilhelm Florin (trade union politics), Lene Berg (questions of social policy and the women's movement), Heinz Hoffmann (for the history of war and the

military policy), Anton Ackermann (international relations, literature and cultural policy) and other German anti-fascists. They gave lectures on their subject area to the entire course and at the same time worked as class leaders for smaller groups with whom they held seminars and led discussions about the respective material and questions that arose. They specified the topics for the papers and assessed them - a form that was successfully practiced instead of exams.

It is astonishing and speaks for the Soviets' confidence in victory

Military and politicians decided to set up such an institution in January 1942, when the German troops were in front of Leningrad, Moscow and Stalingrad, the European part of the Soviet Union was largely occupied and the outcome of the war actually seemed open. Because it was clear to them, the former members of the Wehrmacht, that they were being trained for Germany after the war. Well, we graduates could use the knowledge imparted everywhere; it enabled us to work in many areas. When the course was completed after five months, most of us returned to the various courses

prison camps to build and lead Antifa activists there. Others were employed as teachers at Antifa schools that emerged later. Franz Gold, an Austrian comrade named Zwiefelhöfer and I came back to Krasnogorsk. There I met Dr. Frida Rubiner, already in the 60s, a veteran of the German workers' movement. Between 1914 and 1918 she met Lenin in exile in Switzerland and worked with him; she was delighted with Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin. There was Alfred Kurella, who had been in the Comintern for a long time alongside Georgi Dimitroff

had worked, and the well-known Soviet orientalist Prof. Josef Samuilowitsch Braganski, whose book

My mother gave me "Mussolini without a mask" to read at home. These people instructed us how we could use leaflets and loudspeakers to persuade German soldiers to defect on and behind the front. We were deployed in the Velikiye Luki pocket, where a fascist unit under the command of a Knight's Cross holder was waging a senseless battle. I want to make it short, the action was only partially successful, the cauldron was blown up by the Red Army, the losses were on both sides

were high. Nevertheless, our operational reports were evaluated across the entire front.

I remember a picture from my 8th grade GDR history book that shows you as a front representative for the National Committee "Free Germany" on the Narva Front.

In the first half of 1943 I was involved in many operations at the front. Once I received a grazing shot and Franz Gold, who was himself sick and feverish, dragged me several kilometers to the medical base. From there we were taken to Moscow. On the way

There we were arrested and almost put against the wall because two attentive partisans had noticed that we were German and therefore thought we were spies.

In May/June, after my recovery, I was deployed to the Kursk area, then I returned to Krasnogorsk. In the prisoner of war camp 27 there, Hans Gossens<sup>9</sup> suggested forming a national committee or committee, which could be a first step on the way to a German peace and freedom movement. This idea was discussed lively and a

»Preparatory Committee« came into being

called, which, in addition to Erich Weinert, included four other political emigrants and four prisoners of war (Hadermann, von Kugelgen, Strehrow and Eschborn). The committee made a founding appeal to all German soldiers and officers in the Soviet Union's prisoner of war camps.

I also spoke at that meeting in Camp 27 in Krasnogorsk. I was 23 years old and expressed directly and impetuously what many soldiers were now feeling:

»Hitler will be defeated even without us. But we German patriots cannot be satisfied with that.

Why? Because we know that this gang has sullied the name of the German people with dirt and that only we can cleanse ourselves of this dirt. The time has come when big speeches and lip service are no longer sufficient. Comrades, everyone should think about what today's step means: there will be many fights, it won't be easy. Because it's not about a sandwich, but about Germany.«

On July 12, 1943, the founding meeting of the movement took place in the Krasnogorsk clubhouse, in the hall of the local Soviet

"Free Germany" took place. It was attended by three hundred delegates - so it was not a secret meeting of conspirators, but a gathering of very self-confident, nationally minded men, all of whom had been proposed at much larger meetings in the various prisoner of war camps and were duly elected for this constituent meeting.

True. Also involved were German emigrants who had lived and worked in the Soviet Union for almost ten years, former members of the Reichstag, and party and trade union officials

and a striking number of writers and journalists. Next to them - and this was the majority - sat the delegates of the prisoners of war who had decided to take this step and had already proven their anti-fascist stance several times: soldiers and officers up to majors. The higher ranks such as colonels and generals were missing.

Apparently the old hierarchies and a nationalistic esprit de corps still prevailed in the officer camps, which caused some to hesitate who were actually already ready to confess and take action. Fear could certainly also play a role, from the "Reds"

to be captured. After all, they had sent three observers and there was interest in the conference and its arguments. In any case, the reports from the course of the conference contributed to the fact that a few weeks later in Yelabuga, after a speech by General von Seydlitz and a very convincing speech by Private Hans Zippel, the National Committee of the "Bund of German Officers" (BDO) was founded finally united with the NKFD in September 1943.

Walter Ulbricht was elected to a key position. He should lead the operational management. This worked

as an organ of the Executive Committee, which represented and led the movement between plenary sessions of the NKFD and was accountable to the plenum.

Much has been published about the National Committee "Free Germany", its work as part of the anti-Hitler coalition in many countries and the consequences, I don't need to repeat that here.

In November 1945, when the committee was officially dissolved, NKFD President Erich Weinert self-critically admitted that, despite all its achievements, it had not achieved the goal set out in the founding manifesto. It was not possible for German units to be among them

Commanders had united against the already lost war. Efforts to persuade a majority of the population to visibly protest were unsuccessful.

Germany was not liberated by the German people; only the Allied armies ended the Nazi dictatorship and the war in difficult, sacrifice-filled battles.

How long were you deployed as a frontline representative for the NKFD?

Until the end of 1944. After the Battle of Kursk I had to stop for health reasons, I was completely exhausted and was sent to Lyunovo

sent to the camp in which the German generals were housed. There I met Field Marshal Paulus, Generals Seydlitz, Lattmann and Müller. We had intensive and important conversations.



When the Red Army's offensive on Berlin began, we at the committee headquarters were preparing for the post-war period. Discussions took place in a relatively small circle of particularly active NKFD activists. These focused on three tasks. A relatively small group was prepared to enter Germany illegally in the final months of the war

to return and actively support the resistance groups in the country. A second group dealt with various action plans for a rapid normalization of life at the end of the war. And the third group dealt with probably the most difficult area – youth work in Germany. The aim was to erase Nazi ideology from an entire generation. You could see how deeply this had penetrated the minds of the fanatical Hitler Youth in the Volkssturm. I had already been told that this would be the main focus of my work for the near future

would.

In November 1944, a commission discussed the “combat of fascist ideology” and the “Redesign of the school system”. The commission was headed by General Korfes, and members included the communist Johannes R. Becher, the social democrat Fritz Rücker, the former teacher Ernst Hadermann, and the journalists Theo Grandy and Günter Kertzsch. It was there that I heard terms like this for the first time  
“Conception of a democratic school”, “Renewal of the teaching staff”,  
“Re-profiling the universities” and  
“Professional competition.”

You then flew to Berlin in May 1945, practically in the wake of the Ulbricht group?

To be precise: We landed in Tempelhof on the evening of May 28th.

Wilhelm Pieck had said goodbye to us in Moscow; we were the second group of German anti-fascists that was sent from there to Berlin. The Ulbricht group had been there for four weeks. It had already been decided in Moscow what each of us had to do. Some of us stayed in Berlin to join Ulbricht's group, others moved on to Schwerin, and the third group set off for Dresden.

After landing, we drove in a battered minibus to Karlshorst, where the unconditional surrender had been signed. The Soviet supreme commander in Germany, Marshal Georgi Zhukov, now had his headquarters there. The Berlin city command and numerous other offices of the Soviet army had also been established.

We were greeted late in the evening by Walter Ulbricht and Otto Winzer, then we were told the dates for the next few days and given the addresses where we should be accommodated for the time being. The

The quarters were all in Karlshorst, where a relatively large number of houses had been spared from the war. I still live in this neighborhood, it's only a few hundred meters from here to the German-Russian Surrender Museum.

Do you still remember the drive from Tempelhof to Karlshorst? Naturally. It was horrific. We drove through a vast stone desert on which there were no houses left, only towering over it  
of ghostly, jagged ruins, of house skeletons covered with mountains of rubble, cracked masonry, charred, barely recognizable remains of furniture, doors, floorboards

and the sparse fragments of stoves, tubs and household goods. The trees were literally chopped to stumps by the shells. And there was a smell of death and decay everywhere.

Ulbricht is said to have told you immediately after your arrival that you had to organize “youth work” in Berlin. What does that mean? First, Walter helped me find my mother, who had been liberated from the concentration camp by the Red Army. After briefly visiting my family in Chemnitz, I reported to Otto Winzer, the city councilor for public education and culture, as instructed

had been used. Parties were not yet allowed to think about youth organizations. A main youth committee should be set up at the Greater Berlin magistrate, which will bring together young people  
“collected” them, occupied them and brought them out of the apathy that could be observed everywhere after the end of the Hitler Reich. What frightened me most was the time pressure, because the magistrate wanted to make a decision on the formation and working methods of the youth committee as early as June 20th - but by then the first steps should have been taken and the first experiences gained.

Luckily, I found support from young friends who joined the youth committee and worked actively. I am thinking particularly of Erich Ziegler, who belonged to the Heinz Kapelle resistance group, was sentenced to life imprisonment and then freed from the Brandenburg-Görden prison. I think of Gerd Sredzki and Willi Betsch, of my comrades Herbert and Heinz Fölster, of my Jewish friends Siggi Sternberg and Klaus Rosenthal, who returned to Berlin from emigration in England, of Gerhard Klein, who later became a film director and through his

The youth film “Berlin - Corner Schönhauser” became known to the young social democrats Friedel Hoffmann, Gerhard Spraffke and Ilse Reichel; she was to become Senator for Youth, Family and Sport in West Berlin from 1971 to 1981. Later, representatives of religious communities joined us, such as the Catholic cathedral vicar Robert Lange and the Protestant pastor Oswald Hanisch. And fortunately there were Soviet youth officers, most of them Komsomol members themselves, very educated young men who spoke German and German literature

knew them well and enjoyed appearing in discussion events that we organized. They also paved us many paths to the authorities, and later also to the Allied offices in West Berlin, they provided food and found accommodation that was suitable for youth work. Did you also have anything to do with Walter Ulbricht during those weeks?

Of course. On the evening of June 10th, the representatives of the Central Committee of the KPD, who had come to Berlin in May, met for the last time on Prinzenstrasse in Lichtenberg. Walter explained to us the order number 2 that the

Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAD) had issued. Order No. 1 had been issued the day before: Marshal Zhukov had ordered the establishment of the SMAD and formulated its structure and tasks. With Order No. 2, Zhukov immediately permitted the activities of democratic parties and trade unions in the Soviet-occupied zone and in Berlin. The only condition: they had to be decidedly anti-Nazi. Ulbricht explained to us how this should be evaluated. According to his interpretation, the occupying power signaled that it wanted to administer the country not just according to occupation law, but from the beginning

was interested in the collaboration of German parties and organizations. According to Walter Ulbricht, she wants to strengthen the German self-government bodies, which must be supported and supported by the population.

In the other occupied zones, the activities of parties were only permitted weeks, and in some places months, later.

It was like this. Walter announced the re-foundation of the KPD and signaled the publication of a programmatic call that was currently being coordinated with Stalin. This obviously happened quickly: he was delivered the very next day

given to the public. It was stuck on advertising pillars and house walls, published on pamphlets and in the Berliner Zeitung, which appeared since May 21st. For me and my closest colleagues, it was important that it took a position on youth issues, their rights and obligations. It wasn't even the most important thing that we were now able to stand in front of young people with this call in hand to talk to them about their own opportunities and tasks. If we had done this so simply and clumsily, the initial response would have been very muted, but the opposition would not have been

less harsh than before. The skepticism towards programs of any kind, against verbosely proclaimed goals, whatever they promised, was too deep. At the

On June 12, around two hundred anti-fascist officials of various stripes met in the New Town Hall. Walter Ulbricht discussed with them the formation of an anti-fascist democratic bloc. On June 15th, the SPD was founded and also made an appeal to the public - it was astonishing how similar the basic positions of the programs of the two workers' parties were. A little later two more parties were formed -

initially only here, since the possibility existed in the Soviet-occupied zone and in Berlin - the Christian Democratic Union and the Liberal Democratic Party.

Two weeks later, on June 25th, the KPD's first officials' conference took place in the Colosseum cinema on Schönhauser Allee, in which 1,300 officials took part and at which the next tasks were discussed with Ulbricht. The conference also supported, among other things, the creation of a Berlin Youth Committee. Finally, on July 1st, the party chairman, Wilhelm Pieck, now almost 70, returned from exile to Berlin.

On July 19th - the Potsdam Conference completed the prelude to its program - the first public KPD meeting took place in Berlin's Hasenheide, which was extremely well received. And at the end of July, the SMAD, following a corresponding request, allowed youth committees to be set up in all countries in the Soviet-occupied zone - so our preliminary work in Berlin was successful and was followed. This permission also opened up the prospect of forming a unified German youth organization in a relatively short period of time. There has already been a personnel decision on this

given. At the end of June, Walter Ulbricht asked me to come and introduced me to a man whose name I had already heard but whom I had never seen. His name was Erich Honecker, he was eight years older than me, came from Saarland and had spent ten years in prison under the Nazis. According to Ulbricht, he should take over the leadership of a central youth committee for the entire Soviet-occupied zone, while I should concentrate primarily on youth work in the large city of Berlin, which will soon be controlled by four occupying powers. In this division of labor we soon became friends.

Looking back, the most important thing seems to me to be that we gave young, disorientated people the feeling that they were needed.

You are the last living signatory of the founding document of the FDJ. Can you describe the final steps?

On December 2nd and 3rd, they met at the "Anna Magdalena Bach" school in Pankow, which later became the high school "Carl von Ossietzky", representatives of the youth committees from all over Berlin and from the entire Soviet zone at a working conference. The main result was - in addition to the confirmation that everywhere in

In the eastern zone, there were now functioning and effective youth committees in all cities and municipalities - a unanimously accepted call with the title "Life calls the youth!" The call expressed for the first time the demand to create a unified youth organization.

Following this call, from December 1945 to February 1946, meetings of delegates who spoke out in favor of this unified youth association were held in all five East German states and also in many places in the western zones of Germany. Already in theirs

It was clear from the founding call - without it being formulated literally - that both the Communist and the Social Democratic Party were against a renewed division of the youth into many competing associations or clubs. That corresponded to Ulbricht's intentions, which he had let us know often enough.

However, that did not mean that all comrades shared this view; their own memories of the Communist Youth League or the Falcons were too strong. There was a lively discussion about this, especially in Berlin, and there was even a special active conference

of the KPD to discuss the advantages and disadvantages of both options. Positive: As is well known, the KJVD was particularly strong in Berlin before 1933, and this was also shown in the resistance against the Nazis.

Negative: The Western Allies' aversion to large-scale political organization was particularly noticeable in the western sectors. There was also a desire among the other parties and religious communities, initially vaguely formulated but nevertheless recognizable, to create their own ideological or religiously bound associations. But the realization grew stronger and stronger

especially among the young people themselves, that after the past and in view of the problems, what separated, what was opposite, was less important than the common needs, the common interest and the unifying expectations, the same hopes.

The last decisive push came on February 26, 1946. The Central Youth Committee of the Soviet Zone met with friends from Berlin in the meeting room of the Berlin magistrate on Parochialstrasse. We decided to make an official request to the SMAD to allow a unified youth organization, and

discussed the founding document. It was then signed by Erich Honecker, Edith Baumann, Theo Wiechert, Rudi Mießner, Paul Verner, Gerhard Rolack, Heinz Kulkens, Cathedral Vicar Lange and Pastor Hanisch.

I also signed the document. This was the actual founding of the Free German Youth in the Soviet-occupied zone, which was then approved by the SMAD on March 7th. I'm the only one left from this circle.

You swapped the blue shirt for the uniform in 1950. Not entirely voluntary, as they say.

That's correct. I was by no means a pacifist; as a front-line representative for the NKFD, I also carried a gun and shot at the front. But firstly, I considered armed forces in Germany - a few years after the war - to be presumptuous and unnecessary, not to mention the costs, after all, the rubble of the last war still had to be cleared away. I thought that the Soviet Union would be able to adequately stand up to the Cold Warriors on the other side. Secondly, I saw my future in politics: I wanted to continue working with young workers, schoolchildren and students. Walter Ulbricht

talked to me and talked about the need to protect political achievements militarily. Heinz Hoffmann came and agitated me, Erich Honecker no less. Even Colonel Sergei Tulpanov spoke to me about this matter shortly before his transfer to the Leningrad Naval Academy. They all bit on granite on me. Only Wilhelm Pieck managed to change my mind. At the

On November 1, 1950, I joined the armed organs and for two years was general inspector and head of the People's Police Air (VP-Air), which was initially called the Aero Club Administration.

However, I admit that President Pieck really only gave the final push. At the end of 1949 I was traveling in the Federal Republic for a few weeks and tried to talk to West German youth organizations - the Falcons, the Young Socialists, Catholic and Protestant youth organizations. The Cold War escalated, the confrontation increased, our country was divided by the West through the formation of the Federal Republic - the GDR saw itself as a temporary solution, an interregnum, we continued to fight for the unity of Germany. The intensive discussions to create one

Action groups between young people in West and East came to nothing, we couldn't find a common denominator. I realized that we wouldn't find any allies there, so the un-Marxist principle applied: "Help yourself, then God will help you." And the second reason why I agreed to the suggestion of Pieck and the others who had tried to convince me: What followed was the war in Korea, which showed me how dangerous the situation had become.

Heinz, you know Walter best of all of us. Do you trust him to use an international press conference to tell his own people and...

to tell the world the untruth, as most media now suggests?

Excluded. He was a strategic thinker. Not a chatterbox. I know exactly the situation back then, i.e. 1961. My military functions and my membership in the National Defense Council ensured that fundamental issues were not lost on me. At that time, the political and military leadership of the GDR had no thought of a wall.

When asked by the journalist from the Frankfurter Rundschau whether the formation of a "Free City" would be possible in West Berlin

meant that the GDR's national border ran at the Brandenburg Gate, Ulbricht had replied: "Nobody has any intention of building a wall. I already said before: We are in favor of contractual relations between West Berlin and the government of the German Democratic Republic.

This is the simplest and most normal way to settle these issues. This is something different from what is being spread by the media today. Ulbricht's motto was, and it was also articulated here: We want to negotiate! The fact that the West did not respond to this cannot be blamed on the GDR.

You can't answer this question either

of world politics. As is well known, the Soviet Prime Minister and the US President met for the first time on June 3rd and 4th, 1961. Khrushchev and Kennedy wanted to negotiate in Vienna about stopping nuclear weapons tests, concluding a peace treaty with Germany and settling the Berlin question. Things turned out differently. They threatened each other with war. The talks were broken off without result. Peace was on a knife's edge. And the GDR found itself in the middle of this conflict. Khrushchev had gambled high. He had declared that the USSR wanted to

In December 1961, i.e. within six months, a peace treaty was concluded with the GDR. The organs of the GDR were to be given full control over the access routes to West Berlin by land, sea and air.

Eleven days later, Walter Ulbricht spoke at that same press conference. He assumed that through the peace treaty with the GDR, which Khrushchev had announced that he would conclude by the end of the year, the GDR would take over control of the routes between West Berlin and the Federal Republic. Why should among these

Prerequisites for the GDR to build a wall at all?

It was not until July 23rd, more than five weeks after the press conference, that the commander-in-chief of the Group of Soviet Armed Forces in Germany received the order from Moscow, maps of the GDR with the border between the GDR and the FRG as well as city maps of Berlin with the demarcation line between the East - and prepare West Berlin. Afterwards, the Soviet ambassador Pervukhin informed the GDR leadership that Khrushchev had ordered a "plan for the introduction of the border order" in the strictest secrecy

between the two parts of Berlin".

On August 3, 1961, I accompanied Minister Hoffmann to Moscow, where we on the staff of the United Armed Forces coordinated all cooperation measures between the Supreme Commander of the GSSD and the organs of the GDR. On August 8th, Nikita

Khrushchev confirmed the plan to secure the border with West Berlin.

In a conversation with the Federal Republic of Germany's ambassador in Moscow, Hans Kroll, on November 9, 1961, Khrushchev confirmed this by confessing: I have ordered the borders to be closed. Without us, the GDR would have the border

can't close. Why should we hide behind Ulbricht's back? His back isn't that wide in this case anyway.

The fact that politicians and the media are keeping quiet about this matter today and spreading the untruth about August 13, 1961 and its background and context only shows that the West wants to cover up its own sins.

Rudolf Lindau (1888-1977), in the Soviet Union Paul Graetz, 1916 Spartacus League, founding member of the KPD, editor of various KPD organs, member of the Hamburg parliament and the Reichstag, emigrated to the Soviet Union in 1934, worked there as a historian and teacher at party and Antifa schools, 1945 return to Germany, from

1947 to 1950 joint director of the "Karl Marx" party college, then employee of the Institute for Marxism-Leninism at the SED Central Committee. Controversy with Ulbricht, who, unlike Lindau, assessed the November Revolution not as a socialist revolution, but as a bourgeois-democratic revolution.

Franz Gold (1913-1977), trained butcher, KJV 1927, KPTsch 1932. Service in the Czech army, arrested by the Gestapo after the occupation of the Sudetenland. Pressed into the Nazi Wehrmacht at the start of the war, defected to the Red Army in 1941, co-founder of the NKFD. During the Slovak national uprising in 1944 he commanded a partisan unit. 1946 moved to the Soviet-occupied zone, joined the SED, director of the German Institute for Socio-Economic Problems in 1947/48, then personnel director of the Berliner Rundfunk in the

West Berlin Masurenallee. In 1950 he joined the MfS and became head of the main personal protection department (HA PS), working in this position until 1974. Last rank lieutenant general.

See: Ernst Reuß: Prisoner of War in World War II. How Germans and Russians dealt with their opponents, Berlin 2010.

Heinz Hoffmann (1910-1985),

Engine fitter, 1926 KJVD, 1930 KPD, 1935 emigration to Switzerland, attended the Lenin School in Moscow, 1936/37 the officers' school in Ryazan, from 1937 to 1938 political commissar of the Beimler Battalion, party name "Heinz Roth". Interned in France, in 1939 in the Soviet Union, in 1941 attended a special Comintern course in Pushkino near Moscow. From 1942 to 1944 teacher at the Antifa school in Krasnogorsk. Return to Berlin in 1946, initially as a personal employee of Pieck, later Walter

Ulbrichts, a Central Committee member from 1950 to 1985

Member of the People's Chamber, member of the Politburo from 1973 to 1985. Armed organs since 1950, studied at the USSR General Staff Academy from 1955 to 1957. Afterwards (until 1960) Deputy Minister of National Defense and Chief of Staff, succeeding Willi Stoph as Defense Minister.

Herbert Grünstein (1912-1992), 1930 KJVD,

1931 KPD, 1933 emigration to Luxembourg,

1935 Palestine, from 1936 to 1938 International Brigades in Spain, internment in France from 1939 to 1943, then to the Soviet Union. In May 1945 he became a teacher at the Antifa school in object 165, later the Central School 2041 in Talizi. In 1948 he returned to Berlin, in 1949 he joined the German People's Police, from 1957 to 1973 1st Deputy to the Interior Minister and State Secretary in the Mdl. From 1974 to 1984 was

He was deputy general secretary of the Society for German-Soviet Friendship (DSF), chairman of the Berlin district committee of the GDR's anti-fascist resistance fighters from 1976 to 1989 and member of the SED Berlin district leadership.

Arthur Pieck (1899-1970), son Wilhelm

Piecks, 1916 Spartacus League, founding member of the KPD, 1922/23 employee of the Soviet trade mission in Berlin. Since 1927 head of the Workers' Theater Association of Germany (ATBD), in 1929 co-founder of the International Workers' Theater Association (IATB), since 1932 International Revolutionary Theater Association (IRTB). He was close friends with Piscator and Gustav von Wangenheim and was also well acquainted with Hanns Eisler, Alfred Kurella, John Heartfield, Erwin Geschonneck and other writers and actors.

From 1938 Pieck worked in the Moscow press department of the Communist International, and since 1941 he was an officer in the Central Political Administration of the Red Army. Interpreter for the 1st city commander of Berlin, Bersarin, in the Berlin magistrate in 1946, then personnel director at the German Economic Commission and from 1949 head of the main office for human resources and training at the government. 1955 Director of the GDR Lufthansa, later Interflug.

Hans Mahle (1911-1999), 1926 KJVD, by

1932 to 1935 member of the Central Committee of the KJVD, emigrated to the Soviet Union since 1936, worked for the Communist Youth International, between 1938 and 1941 youth editor for the Moscow Radio. Antifa work in the prisoner of war camp since December 1941

"Spaski Zavod" in Karaganda. As a result of the positive evaluation of his work in Karaganda, Mahle was appointed after a meeting of the

Comintern in Ufa commissioned to take over the management of the youth channel "Sturmadler". This station was aimed directly at the Hitler Youth and young soldiers and was the youth program of the "Deutscher Volkssender". From the spring of 1943, Mahle actively participated in the preparation of the NKFD by visiting prisoner of war camps. He took part in the founding conference of the NKFD in Krasnogorsk on June 12-13, 1943 and became chairman of the Youth Commission of the NKFD. Technical director of the station from August

"Free Germany". As part of his work, he was deployed to the front near Kiev in November 1943. Mahle's German citizenship was revoked in 1937, and he was later sentenced to death in absentia by the Reich Court Martial for his anti-fascist activities. Return to Germany with the Ulbricht group. From June 1945 to

From September 1947, Mahle was a member of the Central Committee of the KPD and the executive board of the SED, and from August 1945 to May 1947 he was a member of the Presidential Council of the Cultural Association. From 1946 he headed the broadcasting department and the department for cultural enlightenment of the Central Administration for National Education, and from 1949 general director of the "German Democratic Radio". In 1951 he was deposed as general manager on espionage charges and sent to Schwerin on probation. Rehabilitated in 1956, editor-in-chief of the Schweriner Volkszeitung, 1959 of the West Berlin Truth. 1962 member of the party executive committee of the SED-West Berlin or SEW, from May 1970 member of the office of the PV of the SEW.

Erich Weinert (1890-1953), trained locomotive builder, studied art in Berlin, officer in the First World War, then teacher at the Magdeburg School of Applied Arts, since

Worked as a writer in 1921. Co-founder of the Association of Proletarian-Revolutionary Writers, KPD in 1929, employee of the Red Flag. Collaboration with Hanns Eisler and Ernst Busch since 1930. 1933 exile in Switzerland, France, then the Soviet Union, from 1937 to 1939 in Spain as a front reporter, internment in France, then again in the Soviet Union. 1943 President of the National Committee "Free Germany", 1946 return to Germany. Although seriously ill with lungs, he worked as vice president of the Central Administration for Popular Education in the Soviet occupied zone.

Hans Gossens (1921-1972), founding member of the NKFD and front plenipotentiary on the Bryansk Front, 1944/45 on the 1st Ukrainian Front. 1945 KPD, 1946 SED, from 1946 to 1955 member of the FDJ Central Council, 1948/49 head of the

FDJ youth college at Bogensee, from 1951 to 1955 State Secretariat for Higher Education and Technical Education, 1956 entry into the armed organs, initially border police, from 1960 colonel in the NVA. From 1963 to 1972 deputy head of the NVA's political headquarters.

Hans Reichelt

The GDR, not Adenauer, brought the prisoners of war home

Hans Reichelt, born in 1925, after being a prisoner of war in the Soviet Union and attending the Antifa school, returned to Germany in 1949, joined the Democratic Peasants' Party, member of the People's Chamber from 1950 to 1990, Minister for Agriculture and Forestry (1953), studied at the Berlin School of Economics. Karlshorst and his doctorate there in 1971.

From 1955 to 1963 again minister,  
from 1963 to 1972 Deputy Chairman of the GDR Agricultural Council. Chairman of the State Committee for Improvement from 1966 to 1972, then until 1989, Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Food Industry and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, from 1982 to 1989 also Deputy Chairman of the DBD. From 1989 to 1990 Minister for Nature Conservation, Environmental Protection and Water Management. From 1994 to 2003 Chairman of the Society for Legal and Humanitarian Support.

You were taken prisoner by the Soviets on May 9, 1945 on Czech territory. Ulbricht was already back in Germany. That means you no longer saw him at the Antifa school. You were released at the end of 1949. You know that claim, widespread in the West, that the release of German prisoners of war - especially those from 1955 - was due to Adenauer's intervention. You have repeatedly contradicted this thesis publicly<sup>1</sup>. Why?

Because it's not true. As the last prisoners of war after Adenauer

Visitors were released in 1955 - and most of them were convicted war criminals, not harmless members of the Wehrmacht - this legend was spread that Adenauer had "freed" them.

The fact is that by 1949 over two million men had been discharged by the Soviet Union. That was about two thirds of all German prisoners of war. Of course, this did not happen because of any intervention from any side. With all due respect: the Soviet Union was a victorious power. She didn't let any German dictate, suggest or advise her anything. That corresponded to the

Potsdam Allied Agreements. At the same time, however, one must see that the party leadership - starting with the call of June 11, 1945, where there is also a passage about prisoners of war - dealt with this problem permanently. There is hardly a board meeting where this topic was not discussed. And the KPD and SED leadership made repeated advances. On May 4, 1946, for example, Walter Ulbricht wrote to the Soviet military administration: "The relatives of the prisoners of war complain very bitterly that their men and sons have not had any for a long time

There have been more signs of life, although it was announced at the time that every prisoner of war would be able to send a message home. Given that the chapter on prisoners of war is being evaluated very politically by interested parties, it should be examined how the technical requirements for notification to the relatives of the prisoners of war can be created," wrote Ulbricht. »It would greatly contribute to the political reassurance of the German population if the uncertainty about the fate of the prisoners of war could be reduced by such a thing

notification would be eliminated. In the case of prisoners of war who died in captivity, such an official notification to the relatives would be particularly desirable for various reasons."<sup>2</sup>

On December 4, 1946, a year and a half after the end of the war, the

The SED leadership issued an initial list of names of prisoners of war, even if it had still been said in May from Karlshorst,

»that there is no office at the SMA that processes preferential release from Russian prisoners of war. Applications and inquiries are therefore pointless.«<sup>3</sup>

Nevertheless, releases were made in batches,

Every day up to 6,000 former prisoners of war arrived in Frankfurt/Oder. This posed an unprecedented logistical problem: the men had to be cared for, distributed and accommodated. On December 31, 1948, Soviet Foreign Minister Molotov stated that there were still 890,532 German prisoners of war in Soviet custody.

These would subsequently be released. I was among those too. I came home at the end of 1949.

On the first day of the new year, I started my political work in the executive committee of the Democratic Peasants' Party of Germany in Berlin.

In short, to my knowledge, the leadership of the SED has campaigned for the prisoners of war in the Soviet Union more persistently and sustainably than any other party or institution in Germany. And Walter Ulbricht played a significant role in this, which unfortunately was never publicly acknowledged. This is partly our own fault: we never talked much about this topic afterwards. What should we also boast about? That millions of Germans invaded the Soviet Union in 1941, behaved like barbarians, plundered the country, and then - after an international anti-Hitler coalition

who had defeated Nazi Germany - were held responsible for this genocide and were sent home again after several years? If there had been publicity about their release, which had been sought for various reasons, including humanitarian reasons, one would have had to continue to talk about German war guilt and war crimes.

In the interest of internal peace, one would do well not to continue rubbing salt into the open wounds. Every hand was needed to rebuild it.

When did you first meet Ulbricht in person?

That was in 1952 at the Second Party Congress of the Peasants' Party. I had already seen him at Wilhelm Pieck's 75th birthday, but had not spoken to him.

The first professional conversation took place in May 1953, when it was clear that I should become Minister for Agriculture and Forestry. There was a meeting in the house of the district leadership of the Berlin SED on Fremde Strasse, to which I was invited. Ulbricht spoke to me there and told me to listen carefully so that I knew what was coming.

Then it came June. How did you get that?

17. experienced?

On the afternoon of June 17th called

Walter Ulbricht brought all the chairmen of the parties and mass organizations to a meeting in Schöneeweide. I drove to Schnellerstrasse to represent the DBD. Soviet tanks rolled into the city center. The CDU chairman was missing. As we later heard, 70-year-old Otto Nuschke had been kidnapped by West Berliners on the way to our consultation. I drove about 150 meters behind his car and saw it being pushed over the Oberbaum Bridge.

Ulbricht was calm. The situation is under control, he said  
"Counter-revolutionary coup" was averted. The parties should

maintain the arguments of the SED Central Committee. He then presented this. At the end he said that he expected criticism and suggestions from the parties and organizations.

Everyone said something. That wasn't necessarily profound, we didn't know enough at the moment. Were those really fascists who rioted in Berlin-Mitte? The Third Reich certainly still cast its shadow, the ruins stood in the city. Of course, there were still pieces of Nazi ideology in people's minds. – My party, the DBD, demanded that the mandatory delivery quantities be checked and that the documents be released in a timely manner

Cultivation notices and – not for the first time – a uniform tax law. The farmers demanded tax justice and wanted to be taxed based on yield and creditworthiness.

This was complied with. But above all: prosecution for non-compliance with delivery obligations has been stopped. The restrictive credit lines for large farmers were also a thing of the past; the farmers' bank was allowed to issue short-term loans to anyone who needed them.

You were part of the delegation that held talks with the Soviet leadership in Moscow after June 17th to discuss domestic politics

Overcoming the crisis in the GDR. How did you become a member of the delegation?

At the beginning of August, Walter Ulbricht called me. "You're going to Moscow with me." He acted as if I knew that a delegation led by Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl was expected in the Kremlin on August 20, 1953. But I had no idea.

"Who else is going with you?" I asked. Ulbricht counted everyone traveling with him

Ministers and deputy prime ministers - Otto Nuschke for the CDU, Lothar Bolz for the NDPD, Hans Loch for the LDPD and himself for the SED. "And you," he said,  
»drive for the DBD.«

"The party chairman is Ernst Goldenbaum," I interjected.

"Good," he responded briefly. »Then you go as Minister for Agriculture and Forestry. That's better anyway. We can introduce you in Moscow as the youngest minister in the entire Council for Mutual Economic Assistance  
..."

The Soviets picked us up in Schönefeld with two planes before 6 a.m.; the GDR was not yet allowed to have planes. This was forbidden to the Germans by the victorious powers in 1945. Grotewohl, his four deputies, including Walter Ulbricht, flew in the first plane.

Protocol chief Ferdinand Thun and the secretary of the government delegation Ludwig Eisermann. In the second one, which started first, the rest of us flew. People's Chamber President Dieckmann said goodbye to us on the runway.

It was my first flight ever. I was correspondingly excited. We climbed into the plane using a sort of step ladder.

Although we started out in wonderful summer weather, the sky became increasingly dark. Moscow was in a bad weather zone. We had to take a detour of about 200 kilometers and ended up against

1 p.m. at an airport other than the one mentioned to us. Nevertheless, the honorary company stood there, which Grotewohl walked off together with the Politburo members Molotov<sup>4</sup> and Mikoyan<sup>5</sup> who came to greet him after the two national anthems had faded away. I wasn't the only one impressed. It was the first ever trip of a GDR government delegation of this size, which was received in Moscow. So far there have only been state visits to Warsaw and Prague.

Even Grotewohl seemed quite excited; he hadn't even closed his coat as he walked along the front. Chief of Protocol Thun shook

visibly annoyed.

You know, I hardly know any reports about this trip, only the reports in the history books. Can you describe your first business trip, which is really historic, in more detail as an eyewitness? I also went on similar trips later, but I would like to know whether it was the same way back then. Besides, the year 1953 was dramatic in every respect. Gladly. So first we were taken to our quarters in black, heavy limousines, and the seven passengers on the first plane, including Ulbricht, were driven to Zarechye

Government guesthouse at the gates of the city.

The next day, Pravda, the central organ of the CPSU, mentioned the Soviet premises in its editorial on the first page, without our arrival having been announced. Firstly, Moscow is against the Federal Republic's integration into the West; the intended integration makes "the reunification of East and West Germany" impossible. Secondly, the Western powers would thereby violate the Potsdam resolutions in which they had committed themselves to the national unity of Germany. And that is why, thirdly, one becomes "the German

population" in the future -

"in accordance with the agreement between the governments of the USSR and the German Democratic Republic" - provide "all-round assistance." That was the argumentative underpinning of the note that Moscow had recently sent to the Western powers. It proposed calling a peace conference and concluding a peace treaty with Germany, as well as the formation of a provisional all-German government and free all-German elections. Thirdly, and finally, in this note the Soviet government proposed a reduction in financial and

economic obligations "related to the consequences of the war" are in prospect, if...

Before Malenkov<sup>6</sup> welcomed us to the Kremlin at 9 p.m., we were shown a feature film. A black and white melodrama from 1934 in which an unhappily married woman fell in love with another man during a thunderstorm. What did the Soviets want to tell us? We then drove to the Council of Ministers. We stood in an anteroom for a while, then the double doors opened. The Soviet Prime Minister Malenkov approached Grotewohl and the big thing began

Shaking hands. Almost the entire Politburo, almost identical to the government, marched - from Khrushchev to Bulganin, everyone was there. Only Beria was missing. It was rumored that he was arrested on June 26, 1953 at the meeting of the Central Committee chaired by Nikita Khrushchev. He was, as Khrushchev later informed, a He was a "provocateur in the German question." On June 2nd, at a Politburo meeting, Beria called for German reunification on the basis of neutrality and democracy, which was in line with the current Soviet line that we know of.

But the others accused the First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister of using this position as a means to raise his own profile. Beria was clearly defeated in the power struggle over the inheritance of Stalin, who died in March. But that didn't concern us, we were guests.

Grotewohl introduced each of us by name. However, Khrushchev, who only reached up to my chest, stole the punch line from Walter Ulbricht by remarking that I was probably the youngest Minister of Agriculture of all the Comecon states. Yes, said Ulbricht proudly, I am only 28 years old.

Khrushchev had all the qualities that were said about him, both positive and negative. Nikita Sergeyevich was open, warm and direct, sometimes a little simple and, when he felt like it, a little cunning. One could also put it more politely: he was good for surprises.

We sat down at a long table, the Russians on the right and us on the left. Malenkov sat at the front. First he spoke, then Grotewohl. He asked that the GDR be granted reparations from November 1954 and that the SAG companies be transferred to GDR ownership.

Marshal Bulganin<sup>7</sup> commented on the cost of occupation. He said that 75 percent of the supplies for the Soviet troops stationed here would soon come from the Soviet Union, which meant that

"Significant quantities of all kinds of food are no longer available to supply the population of the German Democratic Republic." In addition, the GDR economy will receive further support "from the fact that the Soviet troops will buy 30 million cigarettes in the German Democratic Republic. The cigarette manufacturing companies should

"That could be an incentive to further improve the quality of cigarettes."<sup>8</sup> At first I thought the interpreter had misheard, but no, Bulganin really said something so banal and the Russians at the table nodded in agreement.

After him, Malenkov called Mikoyan. The deputy prime minister responsible for trade promised the GDR a loan of 485 million rubles, of which 135 million would be in foreign currency, and this would be at our free disposal. He also announced additional deliveries of goods worth about 590 million rubles, including food and raw materials. We would be too

Buy "over-plan stocks" and pay for them with raw materials, such as cotton in exchange for typewriters and musical instruments. I didn't know that we had too many typewriters and musical instruments, but I wasn't that familiar with it. Mikoyan then talked about the Wismut. It was to be converted into a Soviet-German joint-stock company, previously entirely owned by the Soviets.



Malenkov then suggested that the exchange rate between the ruble and the GDR mark be officially set at 1:1.8, which was explained in detail by Finance Minister Zverev. Then explained

Molotov's intention to elevate the mission of the USSR in Berlin and that of the GDR in Moscow to the status of embassies. High Commissioner Semyonov was to become the first Soviet ambassador to Germany after the war. Semyonov, who was sitting at the table, didn't bat an eyelid.

Gradually everyone had their turn. After each Soviet official, one of us was allowed to respond. So it went back and forth, and what couldn't be clarified would have to be solved by the technical staff the next day, it was said.

At the end, Grotewohl spoke again. He said the Soviet Union's proposals went beyond what was desired

the government of the GDR. Nuschke emphasized that the concession had a pan-German impact, and Ulbricht viewed the sacrifices of the Soviet people as an obligation that we must do everything we could to mobilize our reserves and increase labor productivity. I found that to be a constructive offer.

Malenkov began his closing remarks. He noted that the Soviet proposals had been accepted by the GDR government. He only addressed June 17th indirectly when he said that he was counting on the positive effect of these measures for the new course. That was all. Otherwise

he was of the opinion that the GDR

"Bastion and hope of the entire German people" is that we are deceptive

"Responsibility for all of Germany." He literally said, as I can see from my handwritten notes from that time: "The government of the USSR highly values the efforts of the government of the GDR to create the unity of Germany."

It was just before midnight when the group broke up.

The next morning we were driven to the mausoleum on Red Square and at 11 a.m. we laid a wreath there. And after our mission, which was now an embassy, we paid a visit

After we had paid, we went on a tourist tour of Moscow. We visited Lomonosov University, metro stations on Arbat and much more. From 3:30 p.m. we were allowed to go on an individual shopping spree if we wanted.

Molotov gave a reception in the Kremlin at 6 p.m. After about two hours we left there. The cars were waiting for us in front of the house and the circus performance with Karandash9 began at 8:30 p.m. He presented a scene that brought a lump to my throat: Karandash was strolling through a park and came across a valuable sculpture

from the base, which was broken due to this mishap. When the park ranger approached, in desperation he put himself on the pedestal. His every move was met with laughter and screams from the audience, but eventually the guard noticed. "It only takes a moment to destroy beauty - centuries to restore it," said Karandash and disappeared.

It sounded completely different in this place and to German ears than it did to the Muscovites, who were clearly enjoying themselves.

On the next day, the third day, there were technical discussions in the ministries

scheduled. My Soviet colleague told me about the mechanization of their agriculture and the organization of state estates, about mass awards for collective farmers and agronomists. Most of his remarks concerned the structure of his ministry and its relationship with the Agricultural Academy, where he seemed to know better. I eagerly wrote down what he obviously liked.

Grotewohl and Ulbricht were with Malenkov again to address the questions that had been left out in the large group. It wasn't even close to being there

The prisoner of war problem came to the fore. In any case, there is no clue in my notes.

»In the inner circle of the government delegation, the prisoner of war issue was raised by Grotewohl. This is not an easy problem," Deputy Prime Minister Hans Loch later publicly explained, who was informed by Ulbricht about the conversation with Malenkov.

"We must recognize the position of the USSR, which wants to let the convicted war criminals serve their sentences."10 Hans Loch, the Liberal party leader, appealed for understanding and referred to the crimes "that

committed by fascist bandits in the vastness of the Soviet land. In view of the other concessions, it seemed to him "not without concern to push the immodesty even further and to touch on fundamental and decisive aspects of the Soviet view."

As if to apologize to us Germans for insisting on this point, he added: "The prisoner of war problem had become a mortgage that weighed on all-German relations with the Soviet Union due to the unrestrained American agitation, and that is why we unanimously decided to..."

Raise the prisoner of war issue in the negotiations."

In the end, the topic was included in the communiqué. The wording was as usual for announcements of this nature. "Following a request from the government delegation of the GDR, the following agreement was reached: Measures will be taken in accordance with an established procedure to exempt German prisoners of war from further serving the sentences to which they were sentenced for crimes committed during the war. Excluded from this are people who have committed particularly serious crimes

committed against peace and humanity."

From this message in the communiqué it is clear: The GDR had taken the initiative in the prisoner of war issue, the Soviet side had reacted.

And in fact: a few weeks later the first came home, and that lasted until 1954/55. There was no reception with drums and trumpets for these burdened and pardoned returnees, but their reception and integration into the GDR was prepared as in previous years. At 5 p.m. the German delegation invited Malenkow and Malenkow to our embassy

Khrushchev came and a number of other politicians and military officials, all those we were supposed to meet again at 10 p.m. in the Kremlin for the signing of the protocol on the reparation payments and the banquet that followed.

The seating arrangement was predetermined. I took a seat between Budjonny<sup>11</sup> and Sokolowski<sup>12</sup>. A considerable number of medals hung on the uniform coats of the two marshals.

Budyonny was a three-time Hero of the Soviet Union, Sokolovsky was "only" easier. As a small reserve lieutenant, I couldn't keep up. But they were interested in my past

not both.

Budjonny with his strong mustache turned out to be an original, and his great popularity became increasingly understandable to me. He was a horse lover. The Minister of Agriculture was responsible for horses in the GDR. Aha, that's why I sat in this chair, not because of my military career.

In 1921, as he told me, Budyonny had even prevailed against Lenin, who wanted to close all stud farms and not tolerate private horses. As a Don Cossack, he founded new stud farms, and as Sokolowski smugly noted, Budyonnys excelled

Earnings as a horse breeder are now those of the military. The vodka made the taunt seem milder than perhaps it was intended. He had already been to Bad Saarow, in the military hospital, Budjonny continued to tell me, after he realized that I couldn't contribute much to the topic of horse breeding. Well, I said, I was still in the prisoner of war camp in the Soviet Union, so we couldn't meet. Sokolowski then said that sometimes it would be a good thing if we didn't meet each other too early. "Na sdarovje!" The next morning, August 23rd

In 1953, we went back to Berlin. Molotov saw us off at the airfield. The new ambassador Semyonov flew in Grotewohl's plane. We landed in Berlin after 4 p.m. local time, after almost ten hours of flight. The President of the People's Chamber welcomed us. The entire government was in attendance. We were happy and tired. The next day, it was said, we would meet at the President's official residence in Niederschönhausen Castle to report. The appointment was originally scheduled for Tuesday, so it had been brought forward by 24 hours. We sat at the big one at 12 o'clock

round table. The president was already in the picture. But his remarks gave the visit to Moscow and the agreements reached a statesmanlike consecration. I was impressed. The proportions were right, not too much and not too little pathos, objective despite everything. He evaluated the mission in a simple but convincing way. »The peoples of the Soviet Union suffered most severely from the terrible blood sacrifices and devastation that Hitler's war exacted from the European peoples. Only when we consider this do we realize the full magnitude

the unselfishness and friendship that the Soviet government shows the German people with its decisions. She renounces all reparations. It transfers the operations of the Soviet stock companies to the ownership of the GDR free of charge. It reduces the payment obligations for the stay of Soviet troops in the GDR.

If we ignore the normal trade obligations, the GDR will be completely free of all national debts that arose as a result of the war," said Wilhelm Pieck, visibly relieved. »After all, even for the prisoners of war,

convicted of crimes committed, a generous regulation is provided for, from which only particularly serious crimes against humanity are exempt.

This is an obligation for us to never allow the bloodstained fascism that turned German soldiers into criminals against other peoples to arise again in Germany. We owe this to our own people and to the peoples of Europe."<sup>13</sup>

Until 1955 more were finally added

25,000 men released. And in May 1955, Khrushchev and Bulganin spoke - they came from Geneva from the first summit meeting of the victorious powers

after the Potsdam Conference - with Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht. And there the question was raised as to what would happen to what was left. Khrushchev then said, as if it were the easiest thing in the world, that the experts from the GDR and the Soviet Union should meet together to make a final settlement.

The GDR government should then submit a request to the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet to grant a pardon.

But how did this Adenauer trip even come about? It appears as if the initiative came from Bonn.

This is completely wrong. On June 7, 1955, Nikita Khrushchev wrote to the SED Central Committee in Berlin. "In view of the new situation that has arisen in Europe in connection with the entry into force of the Paris Treaties, the Central Committee of the CPSU considers it expedient that in the near future some new steps should be taken by the Soviet government on the German question, to which we would like to comment. Want to know your opinion."

I think the time has come,

»To take steps to normalize relations between the USSR and West Germany and to send the government of the Federal Republic of Germany a corresponding note

to present the Soviet government with the proposal to establish diplomatic and trade relations between the two countries.<sup>14</sup>

There are plans to invite Adenauer to Moscow.

The process is remarkable in that it shows, firstly, that the initiative for the Adenauer trip came from Moscow and that the Soviet Union did not react to the Federal Republic's accession to NATO in a confrontational manner, but was willing to continue negotiating. And secondly, that the SED leadership was not only informed about the Moscow offer, but also its content

was consulted on this. The result of this exchange of views was the state treaty between the GDR and the USSR, which was to be concluded in Moscow on September 21, 1955 - after Adenauer's departure. It secured the GDR's sovereignty under state and international law and regulated the stationing of Soviet troops on its territory.<sup>15</sup>

The word was in both the invitation to the Chancellor and the letter to the GDR leadership

"Prisoners of war" not included. How could it? The regular prisoners of war were home long ago. Located on Soviet territory

only convicted war criminals remained.

Adenauer responded positively to the invitation from Moscow, but demanded the release of 9,626 people known by name who were still in Soviet custody.

Khrushchev also informed the SED leadership about this on July 14th. It is assumed that Adenauer will also raise this problem during the negotiations.

"That's why we would like to discuss this question with you before the negotiations with Adenauer."<sup>16</sup>

The discussion looked like this:

Khrushchev set the timetable.

But even if the diction makes it clear that the matter had apparently already been decided in Moscow and that Berlin was asked for opinion and approval at best pro forma, this shows that Adenauer's subsequently dramatized appearance in Moscow turns out to be a bit more banal than his own is sometimes portrayed by serious historians. Knowing the Soviet position and the intentions communicated to the GDR leadership by Khrushchev on July 14, 1955, it is self-evident that there is no special mention in this context

Adenauer's "negotiation skills".

speak.

»In this context, we intend to

to declare during the upcoming negotiations with Chancellor Adenauer on the establishment of diplomatic relations between the USSR and the German Federal Republic that the issue of former prisoners of war serving sentences for crimes committed against the Soviet people is being examined by the relevant Soviet authorities and a favorable decision on this question can be expected. After a successful completion

Following negotiations with the government of the German Federal Republic, we intend to exempt 5,614 German citizens, including 3,708 prisoners of war, 1,906 civilians and 180 generals of the former Hitler army, from further serving their sentences and to repatriate them to the GDR or West Germany, depending on their place of residence.

We consider it necessary to hand over 3,917 people (2,728 prisoners of war and 1,139 civilians) to the authorities of the GDR or

West Germany to be handed over as war criminals.

It is planned to publish, as a final act, a decree of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR on the release and repatriation of German prisoners of war and civilians serving sentences in the USSR, which shall state that the release is in accordance with a request from the Government the GDR and the government of the German Federal Republic."<sup>17</sup>

The last sentence is particularly worth remembering.

Incidentally, the total number of 9,531 mentioned here differs by only 100 from the one that Bulganin named Adenauer on September 10th, which can at best be seen as an indication that even the Soviet leadership did not have precise information about how many prisoners they actually still had .

But it didn't change the fact that everything had already been decided before Konrad Adenauer set foot on Soviet soil.

And decidedly in consultation

with the GDR leadership!

Adenauer's trip to Moscow resonated. About the Federal Republic of Germany Embassy in Paris

sent a diplomatic note to the USSR representation there, in which it was once again confirmed that, despite the agreements concluded in Moscow, the federal government neither viewed the status quo in Europe as final nor the other German state as a legitimate representative.

Yes, it was felt that after this trip, both friends and foes, they had to make it clear that neither the claim to exclusive representation nor Western integration would be given up. The party executive and party committee of the CDU confirmed on September 17th: "The Moscow negotiations have resulted in..."

Relations in the Federal Republic have not changed in the slightest. The Federal Republic is a loyal and reliable partner of the West.«<sup>18</sup>

But this isn't just aimed at Adenauer's visit. At the same time, a government delegation from the GDR was in Moscow and concluded the state treaty with the USSR, which was intended to give the GDR a different weight on the international stage. Walter Ulbricht then declared on the 26th.

September 1955 quite confidently:

»The situation in Germany has developed in such a way that the German Democratic Republic is the legitimate German state, whose politics

Future embodied.«<sup>19</sup>

Hans Reichelt: The German war returnees. What did the GDR do for them, Berlin 2007

SAPMO BArch NY 4182/1191

ibid

Vyacheslav M. Molotov (1890-1986) had been a member of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee since 1926. From 1930 to 1941 he was chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, i.e. head of government of the Soviet Union. From 1939 to 1949 he was People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs and from 1953 to 1956 Soviet Foreign Minister. After XX. At the party conference he was expelled from the Central Committee and became ambassador to Mongolia from 1957 to 1960. From 1960 to 1962 he represented the USSR at the International Atomic Energy Agency. 1962

Molotov was expelled from the CPSU.

Anastas I. Mikoyan (1895-1978), member of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CP of Azerbaijan since 1920, member of the Central Committee of the CPSU since 1923, of the Politburo from 1935 to 1966. From 1926 to 1946 he was People's Commissar for Internal and Foreign Trade, for Supply, for the Food Industry and for Foreign Trade of the USSR. From 1937 to 1946 he was deputy chairman of the Council of People's Commissars, then deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers. From 1955 to 1964 First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers. Mikoyan is considered a key player in the overthrow of Khrushchev in 1964 and was chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet from 1964 to 1965 and thus head of state of the Soviet Union.

Georgi M. Malenkov (1902-1988), was Stalin's personal secretary since 1938 and became

In 1946 he became a member of the Politburo together with Beria. After Stalin's death, the Politburo appointed Malenkov as First Secretary of the CPSU Central Committee and Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR in March 1953. A little later, however, he had to hand over the party leadership to Nikita S. Khrushchev, and in 1955 he was also replaced as Prime Minister. His successor in this office, Nikolai Bulganin, made him Minister of Power Plants and Electrical Industry. On July 29, 1957, after an attempted coup against Khrushchev, Malenkov was expelled from the Politburo along with Molotov, Kaganovich and Shepilov, removed from all state and party positions and demoted to head of a power plant in Kazakhstan. In 1961 he was expelled from the CPSU.

Nikolai A. Bulganin (1895-1975), mayor of Moscow from 1931 to 1940, member of the Central Committee of the CPSU since 1934, candidate of the

Politburo, Marshal of the Soviet Union in 1947. Minister of Defense from 1947 to 1949 and again from 1953 to 1955, Prime Minister of the USSR from 1955 to 1958. 1958 Expulsion from the Central Committee and President of the State Bank, demoted to Colonel General.

see Hans Loch: Decisive Days, Berlin 1953, p. 45

Karandash, whose real name was Mikhail N. Rumyantsev (1901-1983), was considered one of the most famous clowns of his time; he was in the ring for over half a century.

Hans Loch: Decisive days... op. cit.

Semyon M. Budjonny (1883-1973) fought at the head of the 1st Red Cavalry Army against Denikin and in the Polish-Soviet War in 1920. In World War II he was commander in chief of the Southwestern Front and the Caucasus Front.

Wassilij D. Sokolowski (1897-1968), first chief of staff under Zhukov, then commander-in-chief of the 1st Ukrainian Front, from 1946 to 1949 commander-in-chief of the Soviet armed forces in Germany, from 1953 to 1960 deputy defense minister of the Soviet Union. BArch DA/4/366

SAPMO BArch DY 30/3503

As early as May 15, 1955, the four powers had signed a "state treaty regarding the restoration of an independent and democratic Austria" in Vienna, which led to the withdrawal of the occupying troops.

SAPMO BArch NY 4090/472

ibid

SAPMO BArch NY 4090/206

ibid

Setting the course

Hannelore Graff Hennecke

He brought us chocolates

Hannelore Graff-Hennecke, born in 1939, is the daughter of the miner Adolf Hennecke (1905-1975), who mined four times as much coal as the standard required in one shift in 1948. That was the start of the activist movement that bore his name. Along with the athlete "Täve" Schur and the cosmonaut Sigmund Jähn, Hennecke is one of the icons of the GDR. Hannelore Graff Hennecke

worked as a teacher in Berlin until retirement age.

My father met Walter Ulbricht in November 1948, a few weeks after his shift.<sup>1</sup> There was no fear of contact. On August 25, 1949, he received the National Prize, 1st class, in Weimar. A festive dinner was held in the evening to mark this award. On this occasion they both spoke about my father's perspective.

"In addition to my practical mining experience, I need theoretical mining knowledge," said the 44-year-old to Ulbricht. »That's why I said it

Desire to visit the Freiberg Mining Academy in order to acquire the theoretical foundations for my future work. Walter Ulbricht readily accepted this, and in January 1950 a course was set up for hard coal mining activists, where I was given the opportunity to study together with 13 colleagues."<sup>2</sup>

After being awarded the National Prize, my father received not only congratulations and invitations, but also countless requests for material help, as the National Prize was endowed with 100,000 marks. My father helped where he could.

He explored more

Opportunities to donate larger amounts and turned to Walter Ulbricht on August 30, 1949 with a request, whom he had invited to a company visit to the Karl Liebknecht factory in Oelsnitz on the first anniversary of his shift. Ulbricht replies a little later: "We have concerns about the distribution of your national prize you suggested.

Although we have nothing against a certain portion being given to a youth home or children's home, we are of the opinion that every award winner should use the majority of the award for their personal needs, otherwise the purpose will be defeated

would be.«<sup>3</sup>

My parents sometimes attended official receptions. We children were always happy when they brought us a sweet little "souvenir". Once, the morning after such a state ceremony, there was a large box of sweets on the breakfast table. We cheered. Sweets or even chocolate were a rarity.

Father told us that Walter Ulbricht gave him the box of chocolates. "Adolf, you have children at home, take them."

From then on, Walter Ulbricht was the greatest for us children.

Political thought and action

My father was determined by his deep conviction that the party he had been a member of since 1946 would always make the right decisions. When Walter Ulbricht was replaced in 1971, my father was deeply shocked. At the 14th meeting of the Central Committee in December 1970, Ulbricht had already been sharply criticized for disproportions in the economy. A majority of the Politburo members had asked CPSU General Secretary Brezhnev in Moscow to remove Ulbricht, also on the grounds that he was hindering the preparation of the Eighth Party Congress. The transfer of power was approved at the 16th session

from Moscow and Erich Honecker was elected First Secretary of the Central Committee.

When my father came home after the crucial meeting, he was restless and felt the need to talk about it with the family.

He had no problems with Erich Honecker. But the way Ulbricht, whom he respected as a statesman and who was often an attentive conversation partner, was pushed aside outraged him. This is not how you treat people who have achieved great merit, he said.

There was no information about the background or internal matters at the conference. We wanted from our father

know whether no one asked and whether the matter was not discussed. "As members of the Central Committee, you have to decide if you can make a difference," we said.

"You have no idea how something like this happens," he said, agitated and resigned and with rare candor.

Back then, we really couldn't imagine that important decisions were made by individuals or in Moscow and that some votes were just a formality. <sup>1</sup> "Our man, say the activists," in: Memories, Vol. 3, SAPMO-BArch NY 4189/97, p. 73.

<sup>2</sup> Hannelore Graff-Hennecke: I am

Bergmann, who is more?, Berlin 2009, p. 122f. 3 SAPMO BArch NY 4177

Klaus Herde

Children's and youth sports schools in the GDR were Ulbricht's idea

Klaus Herde, born in 1925, was born and raised in Breslau, his uncle Karl Mache was an SPD member of the Reichstag and mayor of Breslau until 1933. Apprenticeship as a radio communications mechanic, drafted into the Luftwaffe in 1943, shot down near Erfurt on July 20, 1944.

Hospital stay until July 1945. August 1945, joining the KPD,

New teacher in Gera, founded the first group of the FDJ children's land movement there. Then Thuringian regional leadership of the FDJ, in 1947 member of the Central Council of the FDJ. From 1951 Ministry of National Education, head of the main department for extracurricular education. From 1956 to 1964 member of the central management of the then independent pioneer organization "Ernst Thälmann." After their reintegration into the FDJ, they switched to television. Until 1984, he was deputy chairman of the GDR State Television Committee, responsible for education, youth, sports and children's television.

Afterwards research assistant. Doctorate at the Academy of Pedagogical Sciences, "Deserved Master of Sports" for his achievements in the development of children's and youth sports.

Klaus, you were one of the activists of the FDJ children's land movement, which had already emerged in 1947, were one of the FDJ officials who founded the Association of Young Pioneers on December 13, 1948 and were part of the association's management even before Margot Feist in 1949 Became chairman of the pioneer association.

The history books say that Fridl Hensel-Lewin was the first pioneer chairwoman before Margot Feist. And that's how we leave it. Margot only came to Berlin in December 1949, on the organization's first birthday, and took over leadership. I became her first deputy. Before me there was Karl Morgenstern, but after a short time he was Heinz Keßler "took away" – cadres were scarce back then. Many things were not yet running in an orderly manner and structure. In December 1949, a delegation traveled to Moscow to celebrate Stalin's 70th birthday. Two from the FDJ should also belong to it. These were the FDJ

Chairwoman Erich Honecker and the pioneer chairwoman Margot Feist, later Honecker. And that's when it happened... Walter Ulbricht held his hand over both of them.

Well, we don't want to talk too much about the squad problems at the time. As far as I know, you were brought from Weimar to Berlin in 1947 by Hermann Axen, who was responsible for cadres in the FDJ Central Council, to help set up the FDJ children's association. Was that intended by him or by you as a perspective on life?

At that time people didn't plan over long periods of time. I also told Hermann that I was going back

Public education will decline as soon as the children's association is established. In 1951 I became head of the main department for extracurricular education in the ministry. At that time, Paul Wandel was Minister of Education and Else Zaisser was State Secretary. I was effectively the third man. During that time I met Walter Ulbricht more often. As First Vice Prime Minister, he was responsible, among other things, for the Office for Youth Affairs and Physical Exercise, which was headed by Hannes Keusch. He was previously secretary of the FDJ Central Council and later the GDR's ambassador to Bulgaria.

When did you see Ulbricht for the first time?

At the first parliament of the FDJ in 1946 in Brandenburg. But with all due respect: Pieck and Grotewohl were considerably better known and more popular back then. I can't even say whether Ulbricht spoke there. One of my later encounters with Walter Ulbricht was strange. That was before the GDR was founded. The Eastern Zone Championships in winter sports took place in Oberhof. We, Walter Ulbricht and his partner Lotte Kühn, my wife and I and the Soviet youth officer from the SMA Thuringia, wanted to go to the golf hotel there. But an arrogant snob didn't want to let us in.

We were obviously not among the wealthy guests who still stayed there from all over Germany. The Soviet captain Komin pushed aside the controller with the mandate of the occupying power. Walter said the sentence that I remember: "We won't put tailcoats on our pioneers, but we will take their tailcoats off." The golf hotel later became the "Bruno Kühn" pioneer house. Bruno Kühn was the brother of Walter's future wife. He was a pioneer leader in the proletarian children's movement and was murdered fighting the Nazis. Such names were of course deleted after 1990.

Why did you really want to become a teacher?

I had four siblings. Two died early. I was the oldest and responsible for her. Father was a driver and was rarely at home. Our mother worked as a saleswoman. That's when certain pedagogical attitudes and influences developed in me.

After the famous "Peace Flight to the East" of an FDJ delegation led by Erich Honecker in 1947, there was also a trip of pioneer leaders to the Soviet Union.

Yes, that was in July 1949. We saw a pioneer camp there that was run by the

Moscow Metro was supported. I liked the idea of sponsoring holiday camps so much that when I returned I told Erich Honecker, who then sent me straight to Ulbricht. He listened to it and brought in Economics Secretary Willi Stoph. Together we created a list of 39 large companies in the Soviet zone that we wanted to win as supporters of the "Happy Holidays for All Children" campaign. And I also brought with me the idea of a permanent pioneer camp, something like Artek in Crimea. Originally we wanted to do it in Berlin's Wuhlheide

set up, but Erich and Margot found the Werbellinsee more suitable for children. The pioneer republic "Wilhelm Pieck" was created there near Altenhof in the early 1950s and was handed over by the President in 1952. In conclusion, I have to say: Without our naivety and boundless optimism, we would never have started something like the Pioneer Republic and the Central Pioneer Camps. Just imagine – tens of thousands of children together for four weeks on vacation, what could possibly happen? Nothing happened, thank God. Not only were we lucky, but above all we were pioneer leaders

Love for children and with pedagogical skills.

In the Soviet Union we also got to know working groups. I liked that too. This is how extracurricular education came about in the GDR. First, we founded the central station of the Young Natural Scientists in Berlin-Blankenfelde. Walter Ulbricht opened it in 1952. He spoke there in the Palmenhaus. The facility had been laid out as a main school garden forty years earlier. By the way: In 1994, the 34-hectare facility with the two twelve-meter-high greenhouses was declared a public park and placed under monument protection. Then

The house rotted away for a long time. It was only in 2010 that the governing mayor reopened it with great enthusiasm after reconstruction. Klaus Wowereit praised the facility's "beautiful splendor" effusively, calling it »Refuge in the hectic city«. Of course, he didn't mention the great work that many generations of pioneers had done there in forty years of the GDR.

How did Walter Ulbricht take care of children and youth policy?

I just want to describe this from my experience: I benefited from every conversation on this topic with him.

Admittedly, I only went to him when I had a specific concern and needed a decision, but he always made the decision or delegated it to where a decision had to be made. For example, the establishment of working groups, children's, youth and sports schools, central pioneer camps, central stations for young naturalists, young technicians, young tourists... - after coordination with the FDJ, I presented all of this to him with appropriate suggestions, and he brought them up the way. This is how the ABC newspaper was founded, the children's book publisher, the magazine Die Neue Schule... And he also asked. I

I remember that he consulted me in 1956 when it came to the constitution of the central leadership of the Young Pioneers, at that time when the pioneer organization became independent. He was not particularly satisfied with the work of Schirdewan, who was jointly responsible for this area as Central Committee Secretary.

Ulbricht had already intervened constructively in 1947/48 in the discussion about the structure and name of the children's organization. What should the organization be called, "Kinderland?"

"Children's Association"? Even "Young Freedom" was under discussion (there was no way of knowing who would come up with it later

authorized by name). The FDJ decided on the name "Association of Young Pioneers" – in a sense as a department of the FDJ. He didn't really like that, but he still supported the FDJ's decision. But now, in the mid-1950s, he was of the opinion that it would be better to combine the pioneers into an independent organization. To be honest, he wanted to remove the children's organization from Schirdewan's influence. I was asked whether I would take over the leadership of the then independent pioneer organization. I didn't want to. So 47-year-old Robert took over

Lehmann, whom Ulbricht already knew from his illegal work against fascism, was in charge. His independent position was also underlined by Robert becoming a member of the SED Central Committee. Robert Lehmann stayed until 1964, then Werner Engst came. In 1971 you, Egon, became pioneer chairman.

By the way, when the decision was made in the Politburo at the end of 1956 about the separation of the pioneer organization from the FDJ, i.e. about the formation of the central leadership, Erich Honecker left the meeting room. He was against it and didn't want to have a say. In 1964, Horst Schumann, the then

1st Secretary of the Central Council of the FDJ, to reverse this decision. Honecker supported him. The phase of independence was over again.

We actually wanted to talk about Walter Ulbricht. How did the conversations with him go when you were still responsible for pioneering work?

I went to him with various concrete considerations and suggestions, presented them and expected him to agree. Of course I followed official channels: First I went to Erich, the FDJ chairman, and

he sent me on to Walter.

Was there any previous correspondence, house notices, etc.?

No. The bureaucracy wasn't that strong back then.

Were you on first name terms?

Yes. He always addressed me as "boy," not "comrade," as was common practice. I was "boy" to him.

When did you first discuss the idea of children's and youth sports schools?

I think 1951. I had never heard of it until then. He said: Deal with it! He must have heard of something similar in the...

Soviet Union heard. Special schools for children and young people with sporting talents had already been set up there in the 1930s. We then got started together with the FDJ, the DTSB and the pioneer organization. By the end of the 1950s, around two dozen KJS had been built in the GDR.

Is there an incident, an episode, in which Ulbricht's relationship with his offspring became particularly clear to you?

That was at the beginning of August 1963. We had a pioneering Spartakiad at the IVth German Gymnastics and Sports Festival "upstream," and Ulbricht was closed

appeared at a football match with Sir Stanley Rous, the President of FIFA. It was unbearably hot, I saw him constantly wiping the sweat from his forehead. Lotte said: "Come on, we'd better go." But he waved her off. »I promised the children that I would watch the game. So I'll stay until the final whistle. «

Helmut Müller

And he always asked the legitimate question: "So what's new?"

Helmut Müller, born in 1930, born in Reichenberg, now Liberec, moved to Thuringia in January 1946, construction worker, member of the SED in 1947, attended the Komsomol University in Moscow in 1951/52, then first secretary of the FDJ district leadership in Gera (until 1955), then until 1966 secretary of the FDJ Central Council, from 1966 SED

Berlin district management, second secretary from 1971 to 1989.

Ulbricht was nicknamed by many

"Friend and supporter of youth". His principle of "trust and responsibility for youth" applied particularly to cadre politics. Immediately after the war, at the first meeting of KPD officials - with images of fanatical Hitler Youths still in mind who had shot at the Red Army tanks and their soldiers - he declared: "We have the trust in the German youth that they will come with us Help the experienced anti-fascists from the catastrophe in Hitler's Germany

"1 And contrary to the assumption that the KPD would create its own youth organization or revive the KJVD2, he focused on the formation of a non-partisan, anti-fascist-democratic youth organization. This was a courageous and strategically correct approach. Instead of punishing and excluding the young people seduced by the Nazis, they should be won over to a new society. This required making the seduced person aware that they had followed a bad, criminal idea. The youngsters

did not need amnesty as some demanded. Together with Pieck (KPD) and Grotewohl (SPD), Ulbricht represented the position: It is not the young people who are to blame for war and fascism, but primarily German monopoly capital. It is therefore not about an amnesty for young people, but rather about punishing Nazi and war criminals.

In my opinion, one of Ulbricht's greatest achievements is that anti-fascism became the basis for the actions of all democratic forces in East Germany.

Ulbricht advocated the unity of technical and political education early on

of the youth. In 1948, at a young activist congress, he demanded: "Everyone be a master of his craft." Two years later, he spoke of a necessary campaign for science and culture:

»Every person who wants to do creative work must know the way forward, otherwise he is like a blind man struggling to find the way with a stick. It follows from this that every progressive person today must familiarize himself with Marxism-Leninism.«3

I also have fond memories of his justification of the law on youth participation in the development of the GDR and support in schools

Work, sport and recreation at one of the first meetings of the People's Chamber. This gave the young generation the basic rights - the right to political participation, to work, education, leisure and recreation

First Parliament of the Free German Youth proclaimed in 1946 – force of law.

For the first time in German history, the rights and duties of the young generation in and towards society were legally enshrined.

All of this also determined my own political career. However, at the time I had no idea how these strategic decisions came about

had come. That was to change when I gained insight into Ulbricht's working methods.

It was the evening before the fifth parliament of the FDJ in 1955 in Erfurt4. The First Secretary of the SED Central Committee met with the Secretaries of the Central Council of the FDJ in the Flower City. Although I was first to be elected to the Secretariat by Parliament, I took part in this round. I was impressed by how Ulbricht dealt with us at ease, which noticeably relaxed the



atmosphere. He also seemed to know the problems of young people, but he still asked questions and showed himself to be an attentive listener.

Some of what we said to him was incorporated into the speech he gave later. To his repeated rhetorical question: What is new? he always provided the answer right away. What is new is that the youth "have a beautiful goal in mind: the building of socialism in the GDR and the creation of a new Germany, a united, democratic and peace-loving Germany." He praised the FDJ's great achievements in working among the young generation, but now it is important to "educate all young people to be good patriots. That's something more."<sup>5</sup> He was interested in all aspects of the activity

to develop the FDJ, the accelerated political educational work should be combined and designed with a happy, colorful youth life. At the same time, according to Ulbricht, society as a whole, the branches of the SED, the mass organizations and the state organs, must do more to support the Free German Youth.

The goal was clear and everyone seemed to agree on that. There were many controversial discussions about the route, right up to the SED leadership. This became apparent at the 25th meeting of the SED Central Committee in October 1955. Politburo member Albert Norden sharply criticized the negative comments

Appearances in the work of the FDJ. One often gets the impression, he said, as if there were the FDJ on one side and the youth on the other. He therefore demanded "that the FDJ finally get something going"; it was obviously – let's put it casually – too slow for him. One should focus more on the needs and wishes of girls and boys, organize more hikes, more trips, more dance evenings, more sporting events, more visits to museums, etc. Not a week should go by in spring, summer and autumn without a major FDJ event. north

suggested that a number of departments should be created in the Central Council of the FDJ: for career advice, a separate event service, a department for organizing home meetings, excursions, advice centers for fashion issues, for personal care, for marriage issues, and departments for technology and science, for music, for literature, for board games, etc. The rhetorically brilliant North's proposals were applauded by most members and candidates of the Central Committee.<sup>6</sup>

But not Walter Ulbricht's. Sure, he agreed with some things; he ultimately included it in his speech

said to the Fifth Parliament. But while he focused on holistic youth work that took all sides equally into account, Norden focused primarily on creating interesting leisure time. He obviously neglected political persuasion.

Ulbricht reacted as we had become accustomed to from him: constructively. He did not like to criticize others when it was not clear how the party wanted to change a situation he complained about. He therefore replied that a change in the tasks for the FDJ was not necessary. Rather, it should be considered how

FDJ could be helped. He mentioned the formation of youth committees that would be concerned with organizing lively, interesting leisure time in the residential areas. Young people who are not organized in the FDJ should also be recruited to participate. You have to study new things in practice. The Politburo should then comment on the situation of the youth.<sup>7</sup>

However, Karl Schirdewan, in the Politburo since July 1953 and as Central Committee Secretary responsible for the party's youth policy and the guidance of party members in the Central Council of the FDJ, favored Norden's approach

and arranged for his speech to be published in Junge Welt.<sup>8</sup> This in turn irritated the FDJ leadership that an orientation was published in the central organ of the youth association that was clearly not that of the first man in the party. In order to create clarity here, it was necessary for the party leadership to make a fundamental decision on youth work. This happened at a meeting of the Politburo on the 24th.

January 1956. After heated discussion, the paper "Our hearts and our help to the youth" was approved.

The Central Council of the FDJ took this decision as a basis for its decision

an appeal to the public: "To all of you, who are young!"<sup>9</sup> In it, all young people were offered a comprehensive opportunity to exchange opinions and pursue their interests.

But the topics suggested in the call for a comprehensive debate were soon overshadowed by a larger event, the XXth. Party congress of the CPSU, superimposed. Khrushchev's revelations "about Stalin's personality cult and its consequences" also provoked heated discussions and countless questions among young people, especially among students and young members of the intelligentsia. In this

During his turbulent times, Walter Ulbricht was sharply attacked from many quarters, not just by young people.

Initially, the members of the party leadership united against the agitation against Ulbricht. Schirdewan highlighted Ulbricht's achievements "for the German working class in creating a party of a new type, together with Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl and the members of the Central Committee, in the struggle for the unity of the German working class."<sup>10</sup> Maintaining the unity of the party and its leadership is vital if the GDR wants to continue to exist. (Interesting is,

that during this difficult period for him, Ulbricht implemented an important decision that is mostly ignored by contemporary historians. It was about "measures for the broader development of democracy in the German Democratic Republic.")

The dispute about how to deal with the XX. The party congress of the CPSU and its findings came to a head in the Politburo. Fred Oelßner declared in the Politburo on July 3, 1956: "With the evaluation of the XX. "The party conference hasn't really started yet," said the Politburo member. »Especially in the

"We avoid the question of personality cult," he said. »The important question for us in this context is: Is there a cult of personality in the SED? Yes, there is, and in connection with it there is a personnel regime that is mainly exercised by Comrade Ulbricht."<sup>11</sup> Quite a few GDR citizens also had this impression. And I don't want to judge whether this impression was right or wrong, justified or absurd. It was a political and fundamental question. And that was: Do you resist this mood or do you give in to it? Does the party win by replacing Ulbricht, or

would she lose? And wouldn't giving in on this issue be a surrender to those forces who didn't want a better GDR, but rather its elimination? The discussion, which was also influenced and forced by the West, objectively did not mean a strengthening but a weakening of the party.

At the end of July 1956, the 28th meeting of the SED Central Committee met and the plenum united against the slander.

How necessary this was was shown by the worsening of the situation, particularly at universities and colleges.

In response to the replacement of the

The leadership of the Polish United Workers' Party (PVAP) and the counter-revolutionary activities in Hungary formed organizational structures with names such as "Council of 13" or "Council of 13" in various faculties

"Council of 56," which called for anti-state actions. Signatures were collected for an anti-communist appeal that said: "We call on every student to fight against the foreign yoke in both the West and the East. The recent events in Poland and Hungary show very clearly that this fight will not be hopeless.

Students, refused to work in

the communist coercive organization FDJ. Take advantage of the opportunity to train on GST weapons. Draw the lessons from the popular uprising of June 17, 1953!

Students! Give the impetus to the German struggle for freedom!«<sup>12</sup>

The planned counter-revolution was to begin with a student rally at the Brandenburg Gate. It was a test of strength that was actually supposed to be about the existence or non-existence of the GDR.

Prudence and clarity in leadership were required.

Ulbricht pursued a double strategy: he sent Politburo member Alfred Neumann

and Karl Schirdewan in a meeting of students at Humboldt University. He wanted to defuse the situation politically, not with the state's violent instruments.

However, if opposing forces continued to provoke, he also made it clear that he would defend the workers' and peasants' power with violence if necessary. With Ulbricht's approval, working class combat groups were initially only supposed to show their presence and take over the entrance control in front of the Humboldt University building. In this way, provocateurs from West Berlin were to be prevented from taking part. Schirdewan leaned

this measure. He thought that one could get away with the means of ideological persuasion alone; he did not believe in it, "that this is a fight with the American and English agency that worked from West Berlin at the Humboldt University."<sup>13</sup> In the FDJ Central Council, we initially learned nothing about these internal processes in the Politburo. As Schirdewan's meetings with us increased, we sensed his political uncertainty. Week after week he made new, often contradictory demands for working with young people.

On March 19, 1957, he finally presented a fundamental resolution and a draft of a university program to the FDJ. We secretaries of the Central Council were asked to come to the Politburo.

We waited hopefully for a long time in the anteroom until we were finally called. Walter Ulbricht informed us that the Politburo had come to an agreement and that Karl Schirdewan would now tell us what decision they had come to. His information was not only brief, but above all surprising. The Politburo does not agree with the documents, said Schirdewan.

That meant his line had been rejected, that for the

Politburo member intended for youth work failed.

The real surprise for us, however, were the proposed resolutions that Walter Ulbricht put forward. He recommended that we organize an open and broad exchange of views on fundamental questions of the FDJ. The draft of a university program should be given to the FDJ university groups for free discussion with students and members of the teaching staff. He recommended that district delegate conferences of the FDJ should take place so that, democratically developed and legitimized in this way,

the Central Council can make a decision. Members of the Politburo would also take part in these deliberations.<sup>14</sup>

Ulbricht's suggestions proved to be timely. The discussion with the students and professors led to a university program that postulated the goal: "The task of the universities and colleges in the GDR is to educate young scientific, technical and artistic talent for the cause of the workers and farmers and their socialist state power." 15

On April 8, 1957, Ulbricht invited us to a meeting.

When we met the members of the Politburo Friedrich Ebert, Hermann Matern and Alfred Neumann as well as the Central Committee members Gerhart Eisler and Horst Klemm in his anteroom - the head of the youth sector represented his boss Schirdewan, who was on vacation - we suspected that something fundamental was at stake would go.

It started innocently enough. Ulbricht criticized small things in the current draft resolution, which did not require such a high-level meeting. Then he shocked us with the comment that it was obviously not clear what the FDJ was.

We tried vigorously to answer this

admit. However, none of our comments seemed to satisfy him. When Horst Klemm said that the conclusion to be drawn from what had been said so far was that "the FDJ is a socialist youth organization," Ulbricht took the floor. That's exactly what it's all about, he summarized. He had already formulated this statement in the draft of his presentation for the 30th conference, but then deleted it again because it might not have been understood. Now the Central Council of the FDJ should comment on this.

On April 12, 1957, Ulbricht gave a speech at the FDJ's district delegate conference

In his hometown Leipzig, the public was informed about the decision of the FDJ Central Council.<sup>16</sup>

A little later, on April 25, 1957, he took part in the meeting of the FDJ Central Council and explained the connection between the prospective development of socialism in the GDR and the resulting new requirements for the work of the FDJ. The conference declared the Free German Youth to be the socialist youth organization of the GDR.

It is thanks to Walter Ulbricht that the FDJ was not crushed by factional struggles in the SED during difficult times. He helped constructively, the FDJ

to form a socialist mass organization of youth.

Walter Ulbricht: Speech at the first officials' conference of the KPD in Greater Berlin, in: On the history of the German workers' movement II, Berlin 1953, p. 446.

ibid.

Walter Ulbricht: On the history of the German workers' movement, Berlin 1958, Vol. IV, p. 127.

The FDJ parliament was the highest organ of the youth association. It met every four to five years and elected the governing bodies.

Documents on the history of the FDJ, Vol. 3, p. 413.

SAPMO-BArch DY 30/ IV 2/1/152

ibid.

Young World from November 18, 1955.

SAPMO-BArch DY 30/ J IV2/ 2A/ 468

Minutes of the 3rd party conference of the SED, Berlin 1956, vol. 1, p. 316.

Quoted from Karl Schirdewan: Uprising against Ulbricht, Berlin 1994, p. 181ff.

Ilko-Sascha Kowalczyk: The suppression of the opposition at the veterinary faculty of the Humboldt University in Berlin in the crisis of 1956/57.

Series of publications by the State Commissioner for State Security Records of the GDR, Berlin 1997, Issue 6.

Erich Honecker: Report of the Politburo to the 35th meeting of the SED Central Committee, 3rd to 6th.

February 1958.

SAPMO BA DY 30/ J IV 2/ 2 A 555.

Documents on the history of the FDJ, Vol. 4,

p. 66ff.

New Germany from April 13, 1957.

Hans Modrow

With youth on slippery ice

Hans Modrow, born in 1928, apprenticed as a machine fitter in Pomerania, joined the Volkssturm at the age of 17. Without ever firing a shot, he was taken prisoner by the Soviets for four years. 1949 return to Germany, FDJ functionary, attended the Komsomol University in Moscow in 1952/53, from 1954 to 1957 distance learning at the party university

in Berlin and from 1959 to 1961 at the University of Economics. Secretary of the FDJ Central Council in the 1950s, then first secretary of the SED Berlin-Köpenick district leadership, secretary of the SED Berlin district leadership until 1971, head of the agitation department of the SED Central Committee until 1973, then until 1989 1.

Secretary of the SED district leadership in Dresden. From November 1989 to April 1990 Prime Minister of the GDR. Member of the state parliament of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania (until 1952),

the People's Chamber (1958-1990), the German Bundestag (until 1994) and the European Parliament (1999-2004). Honorary chairman of the PDS up to

their absorption into the Left Party in 2007.

The People's Chamber still had provisional status when the first law on youth and sport was passed on February 8, 1950. The GDR should become a state of youth and sport. We never really succeeded with youth, but sport brought us world recognition. With 17 million inhabitants, taking third place in world sport was and remains unique and will remain associated with Walter Ulbricht. When I was awarded the title "Deserved Master of Sports" in 1961, that was it

a recognition for the Berlin FDJ, for our initiative in developing appealing forms of mass sport, which Ulbricht attached more importance to than the top of the GDR sports organization DTSB. Today, when I follow the mass runs in New York, London and Berlin, I still remember the BZ's annual Berlin run in the evening in the 1950s, in which thousands of students and apprentices took part, and the table tennis tournament of thousands (TTT), which has been held annually since 1960 until today. The Olympic Day of Athletics, first held in the Jahn Sports Park in 1963, returned in 2002

back there when the Olympic Stadium was renovated. Our Olympic Day lives on as the International Stadium Festival (ISTAF). The GDR's youth policy bears the signature of Walter Ulbricht and was also used to overthrow him.

In 1955 he pushed for a change at the top of the FDJ because the youth association was not reaching the masses of young people. Erich Honecker, until then chairman of the FDJ, was sent to study at the party college in Moscow. He was succeeded by 29-year-old Karl Namokel, a trained shipbuilder and until then secretary for economics in the SED district leadership

Rostock.

In 1956 the XX. Party congress of the CPSU took place. Nikita S. Khrushchev exposed Stalin's crimes and spoke of the cult of personality. It was a shock for everyone who used the Soviet Union as a guide. Open questions, including doubts, arose. Insecurities at the top of the party led to power struggles, which also took place in connection with youth policy. Due to different positions, there was also scope for political activity among the youth. In Berlin, youth forums were held under the motto »An answer to every question«

organized. The FDJ district leadership and the editor-in-chief of the Junge Welt newspaper as organizers had a permanent place on the podium. Gerhart Eisler, head of the State Broadcasting Committee, was also there. He once answered a question about his biography: "You should know that communists are also born bedwetters." He wanted to make it pointedly clear that no one was perfect.

There were two forums with Gerhart Eisler about jazz. At that time, the topic was politically linked to the cultural influence of the USA, called cultural imperialism. Eisler provided it

Music in a historical context, placing it in the history of

"black America" and connected this with his own experiences during his emigration to the USA.

Ulbricht increasingly had political stomachaches with this series of events; he eventually called them "donkey meadow". The forums have been discontinued. The FDJ should focus more on young artists. In June 1956 a conference was held in Karl-Marx-Stadt. The Berlin writers Heinz Bieler, Jens Gerlach, Heinz Kahla and Manfred Streubel performed well

prepared. Their four speeches sounded like a joint presentation in which they criticized the youth association because it did not adequately represent their interests. Konrad Wolf, member of the Central Council and later President of the Academy of Arts, responded to this in his closing statement. From Karl-Marx-Stadt we immediately drove to Rostock for the 13th meeting of the Central Council. There I explained that we as youth officials would be making a big mistake if we saw ourselves as opponents and not as partners of young cultural workers. I had no idea what role this statement would play two years later.

In 1957 there was a realignment in the party's youth policy. Ulbricht himself sought to achieve what seemed to be a contradiction that could not be resolved. On the one hand, he remained focused on gaining mass influence through the FDJ, i.e. on growing membership numbers. And on the other hand, he wanted to express the political character. The FDJ should become a "socialist youth association," which is why political-ideological work should be expanded. That was clearly a balancing act. In the background there were sharp arguments between Ulbricht and Schirdewan over course and power

the party. Ulbricht prevailed, and in February 1958 Schirdewan was expelled from the SED Central Committee and relieved of all functions. While the disputes with Anton Ackermann at the beginning of the 1950s were about different positions on the development of socialism in Germany, the conflict between Schirdewan and Ulbricht was of a personal nature, which camouflaged at best as a dispute about strategic orientation. It was held in the run-up to the 5th party congress, and after it was decided in the party, he continued in the leadership of the youth association, for Schirdewan

Until then, he was also responsible for the FDJ as Central Committee Secretary.

Karl Schirdewan's wrong orientation in youth policy was taken into account in the report on the activities of the Secretariat and the Office of the Central Council. It was proven that Schirdewan's work was harmful to the FDJ. The agenda was indeed "Take up the weapons of culture!", but cultural events such as the youth forums or leisure activities such as camping were considered apolitical. The authors of the report remembered the congress of young artists in Karl-Marx-Stadt and the ones that followed

Central Council meeting. And that I had supported the position of Gerlach, Kahlau, Bieler and Streubel - no matter how exaggerated it may have been in detail. But it was correct in principle because they had unspokenly opposed the now criticized Schirdewan line. It wasn't phrased that way, but that's exactly how it was meant. Now I came into focus as a supposed Schirdewan man. However, the argument with me did not take place in the plenary session of the Central Council, but in the SED party group. Ultimately it was about staying in my position. That I don't like

Schirdewan was sent into the political wilderness thanks to Alfred Neumann, first secretary of the SED Berlin district leadership since 1953 and now Central Committee Secretary, and Walter Ulbricht, who approved of Neumann's personnel policy. The Fifth Party Congress in 1958 ended the disputes in the SED leadership that had preoccupied the party since 1953. In addition to Walter Ulbricht, who had asserted himself and his line, organization and cadre secretary Alfred Neumann was the new important man. Nikita S. Khrushchev, guest of honor in the presidium of the party congress, strengthened Ulbricht in his speech. This presented the »Ten

Commandments of socialist morality", which - analogous to the Christian commandments - represented the canon of values of atheist socialists and should also be a moral and ethical guideline for young people in the FDJ. Until then and thereafter, there were repeated personal encounters with Walter Ulbricht, which gave me the image of a politician who acted purposefully and strategically. When the five states were dissolved after the 2nd party conference in 1952 and 15 districts took their place, I sat at Walter Ulbricht's table several times. The consultations were not the last thing

about management issues, because the new structures required three times more staff. There was no agreement between the FDJ chairman Erich Honecker and me as the state chairman in Mecklenburg when it came to filling the secretariats in the new district management. Walter Ulbricht mediated and equalized.

I then went to Moscow to study and did not return until August 1953. Our argument back then was forgotten; I was elected as secretary of the Central Council and as first secretary of the FDJ Berlin district leadership. There were no conflicts again until 1954, when World War II took place.

Germany meeting was prepared. Friedrich Ebert, Lord Mayor of Greater Berlin, as it was officially called at the time, and member of the Politburo, followed the decisions of the Politburo and the instructions of Walter Ulbricht. The FDJ chairman Erich Honecker interpreted some decisions differently. And in order not to offend personally if he wanted to object, he sent the first secretary of the FDJ district leadership forward. Then I had to do this and that with Friedrich Ebert "clear up". If this didn't work in his favor, he criticized me: As secretary of the Central Council, I would have approved the decisions of the leadership

youth association in Berlin, I am not the representative of Berlin's interests in the leadership of the youth association. I vividly remember events in 1954/55 with the Berlin youth that Walter Ulbricht held in the sports hall on Stalinallee. It was attended by more than three thousand girls and boys who asked questions to the First Secretary and Deputy Prime Minister. These were accounts of how the law on youth and sport was implemented. For Ulbricht, such meetings were appropriate

his understanding of socialist democracy. Those who deny this should ask themselves: Was there ever a comparable law in the Federal Republic? And: Did Adenauer even once present his politics to young West Germans and give an account? And I remember the winter of 1956/57. After many disputes with the administration, the youth committee of the Berlin city council had managed to have ice skating rinks built in the city area. When pictures appeared in the newspapers showing young people skating, I received a message

Call from Ulbricht's office. Comrade Walter Ulbricht would like to be invited to go ice skating with the youth. I'm sorry, what? Well, we asked him to go to the Spritzbahn at Treptower Park S-Bahn station. And the party leader, already past 60, appeared with ice skates and did figure eights and skated curves. And the people on the ice didn't watch from a distance, but took the opportunity to talk to him too.

When preparing the Central Committee's report to the Fifth Party Congress of the SED in 1958, which Ulbricht was supposed to present to the plenum, I was asked to edit the section on youth and sport. I

I assume that I passed this test because I was elected as a candidate for the Central Committee of the SED.

In July 1963, Kurt Turba was appointed chairman of the Youth Commission at the Politburo at Walter Ulbricht's suggestion. We not only knew each other well, we were friends. Turba, a year older than me, had studied history in Jena and had been running the student magazine forum for ten years, which was published under the umbrella of the FDJ publishing house "Junge Welt". Ulbricht tried again to describe squaring the circle

and to resolve the fundamental contradiction of his youth policy, namely that between the claim that the FDJ should be a mass organization on the one hand and a helper and fighting reserve of the SED on the other. On behalf of Ulbricht, Turba, together with Heinz Nahke, his successor as editor-in-chief of the forum, with Harald Wessel, Brigitte Reimann and others, drafted the youth communiqué "Trust and Responsibility in Youth", which the party leadership unanimously accepted in 1963. In that year, on the VI. The SED party conference was also called the reform concept of the socialist society

"New economic system of planning and management" was decided. This no longer met with approval in Moscow after the change of power there in 1964. In contrast to Khrushchev, his successor Brezhnev did not tolerate any corrections to the Soviet model of socialism.

The first massive criticism of this course took place at the 11th plenum of the SED Central Committee in December 1965. The spokesman was Erich Honecker, assisted by Paul Verner, first secretary of the Berlin district leadership and member of the Politburo. The accusations directed at Turba were aimed at Ulbricht. They beat the sack, but meant the donkey.

The dismissal of Turba was intended to undermine Ulbricht's authority. Both Honecker and Verner were no match for Ulbricht, but as his students they had learned how to fight for power. In 1970 they were superior to the old Ulbricht.

At the 11th conference, Honecker began a discussion of cultural policy and the correction of the youth policy associated with Turba; resistance to the New Economic Policy began. In this context, Günter Mittag's role is bad. Together with Erich Apel, he played a leading role in the development of the NÖS and his

Power strengthened. When the internal balance of power changed and Ulbricht's downfall was ready, he stole Honecker's trust, which would remain with him until 1989.

In the summer of 1966, Erich Honecker, as cadre secretary of the Central Committee, spoke to me about a position as economic secretary in the Karl-Marx-Stadt district. I was fundamentally prepared to follow this party mandate.

But when Ulbricht found out about this, he rejected my involvement in Saxony with the argument that the Berlin party leadership was finding it difficult to gain trust both internally and externally. Modrow is someone you trust.

That's why he stays here, in Berlin.

The problem of a lack of acceptance (or trust) could already be observed under the conditions of the open border, particularly in West Berlin. Repeatedly, at least half a dozen times, Ulbricht invited Alfred Neumann's successor at the head of the Berlin party organization, Hans Kiefert, to the Politburo with the district leadership's office. I accompanied him. The SED had little impact in West Berlin, and things weren't really making much progress in the eastern part either. Hans Kiefert tried really hard, but was overwhelmed by his task. The pressure grew. Ulbricht saw that and

Carefully ensured that Kiefert was able to move to the magistrate in 1963 as a city councilor for labor, without the opprobrium and disgrace, as usually happened when a high-ranking party official lost his office. Ulbricht appointed Paul Verner as Kiefert's successor. He was soon to form an alliance with Honecker and was no longer Ulbricht's man.

After Ulbricht resigned as First Secretary, he remained Chairman of the State Council. One of his tasks was the accreditation and farewell of diplomats. So far, the ADN news agency has always reported this with a

Picture message reported. Honecker ordered that this should not be done in the future. Of course, Lotte Ulbricht noticed this and called ADN, where they responded evasively. Then she called the responsible department head in the Central Committee. That was me.

"Hans, please make sure that this is reported as usual." Well, I could no more decide to lift the order than I had ordered it. I informed my boss Werner Lamberz and this Honecker, as a report could not be avoided if there was a specific request.

Honecker then invented the function of "officiating

Chairman of the State Council", which the constitution did not provide for. But Friedrich Ebert, son of the former Reich Chancellor of the same name, was happy to take on the role of head of state, if only because of the continuity. From then on he received the ambassadors. So another call from Lotte Ulbricht became unnecessary.

I experienced Walter Ulbricht as a politician who reflected the contradictions that were pronounced in his generation of communist politicians and officials. Nevertheless, for me he is one of the most important German politicians of the 20th century. century. He had been on the front lines of the

During the Second World War he helped to save German honor in agitation missions against fascism. And the fact that the Cold War did not become a Third World War is also to his credit. That remains.

Klaus Höpcke

1949, 1953, 1963 etc. –

Ulbricht was always good for surprises

Klaus Höpcke, born in 1933, after studying journalism, research assistant at the Karl Marx University until 1960, then (until 1962) deputy secretary of the university party leadership, then

1. Secretary of the Leipzig district leadership of the FDJ. From 1964 to 1973 worked at “New Germany”, then – until 1989 – deputy minister of culture

and head of the publishing and book trade headquarters. From 1990 to 1999 member of the Thuringian state parliament, member of the Council of Elders of the Left Party.

I held a brightly lit torch in my left hand and a letter in my right - equipped with this, I walked in the middle of a street that led from Berlin-Pankow to the city center one evening in the fall of 1949. Around me were members of the Free German Youth and many other young people from all circles of the recently founded German Democratic Republic. Including a group

Neubrandenburg high school student, to which I belonged. We wanted to welcome the founding of the state with the torches. And we wanted to congratulate the women and men who were ready to take on responsibility in this state and who had now gathered in the back of a truck on Unter den Linden on the edge of the demonstration. They responded to our congratulations with cheerful shouts and waves. We were particularly interested in making warm eye contact with Wilhelm Pieck as the president of our new state.

We sang songs and chanted for peace and against the people of Bonn

Separatists who divided Germany. And the whole time I was thinking – “in passing” – about how the letter could get from my hand into the hands of one of the people in the truck stand. We had learned that Walter Ulbricht had initiated special efforts to pass a law to promote youth. That's why we wanted to tell him about what we were doing and what we weren't doing in a short text of information in a letter.

I walked up to one of the guards at the truck. He brought in one of Walter Ulbricht's employees and I told him what we were doing

Neubrandenburg had written down - to be passed on to WU.

We first reported what we had done in the years since the end of the war. Above all, it was about our operations to clear the rubble from the city center of Neubrandenburg. Only five streets remained undestroyed. We loaded trucks with stones from the ruins and ensured that they were transported properly to building material collection points. We also described how we drove from school to surrounding villages to perform songs, quote poems, try out cabaret, etc

Discussions on political controversial topics

such as the Oder-Neisse peace border, to participate in the formation of opinions and cultural development.

Of course, we also talked about progress in school teaching and initial approaches to more thorough study of history, including the history of the workers' and youth movements.

The first encounter with Walter Ulbricht came three and a half years later. I had now finished school and started studying journalism in Leipzig. On June 15, 1953, I began my editorial internship at Freiheit in Halle. Two days after starting work, the riots began

in companies and on the streets.

Many comrades took on tasks in companies on strike. So do I.

My “place of work” of this kind was the Hallesche Kleiderwerke. As a nineteen-year-old at the time, it wasn't easy for me to T. to explain to considerably older workers that they were acting against their own interests with the work stoppages. However, in the conversations about our everyday lives - hers and mine - we became closer. The most difficult thing was to overcome the absurdity of the intention to only stop striking when the Buna plant came out

Readiness for the end of the strike will be announced. After an initially agreed end to the strike, a second strike was started there.

In the difficult situation surrounding Buna and the neighboring Leuna factory, different ideas for action emerged. Some tended to avoid the massed confrontation. It was very important that Walter Ulbricht decided to go to the Leuna works himself and take part in clarifying the causes and finding ways out. For his contribution to the discussion, his part in the dialogue

Two things were characteristic between staff members and leading comrades: 1. Critical consideration and even condemnation of the lack of attention to workers' interests; 2.

Rejection of attempts to lead the confrontation with incorrect methods of managing work processes in the company into a rejection of socialist statehood in the GDR. The combination of these two positions helped greatly in the journalistic evaluation of meetings of this kind in the newspaper: free from whitewashing and trivialization and free from

sectarian escalation and intensification of conflicts.

An episode from youth work in Leipzig in 1963 that has remained in the memory of many - because of its peculiarity: a youth rally with Walter Ulbricht was announced in the congress hall of the Leipzig Zoo.

I invited young people who had been asked to contribute to the discussion to come to the FDJ district headquarters a few hours before the event began. And then I asked them not to take their texts, which had certainly been agreed upon with FDJ and party secretaries, into the congress hall. I gave one to each and one

She allowed each of them to use paper and a writing utensil (if they didn't have their own with them), and she allowed them to take key-word notes undisturbed and collected the ready-made "reading speeches."

Together with Kurt Turba, Ulbricht was able to win over the idea of letting the young people speak first so that he could comment on what they had said.

As you can read in the speeches documented by Junge Welt, it was an evening of intellectual liveliness among young people in politics, in which the man at the top of the state was able to keep up with what he had to say. Ulbricht was

not squeamish. He pushed for a high level of professional skill and curiosity in the acquisition of knowledge about social development, for everyone to be active in their own work and for progress in this development. He polemicized against the then fashionable tendency in political education to "study" works by classics of Marxist world analysis in "samples" that were offered in excerpts in anthologies. He urged that such works be read and discussed in their original form and in their entirety. And when it came to professional skills, he advocated striving for the highest quality,

so that the formula of German workmanship would become fully valid again. To the delight of most people in the room, he made it clear that he was on the side of those who consider music and dance to be an enrichment of cultural diversity instead of listening to them in a bad mood with uptight severity and eyeing the dancers with displeasure and even suspicion.

Politics is the art of the possible, Bismarck is said to have said. In fact, he made statements that amount to this statement. At Poschinger you can find it in the

"Table Conversations" the remark dated August 11, 1867: "Politics is the study of the possible."

And in the middle of 1897, Poschinger's dinner partner formulated the sentence: "Politics is less science than art."

At the end of the 1960s, an influential physicist and a no less influential politician in our country, the GDR, considered the common Bismarck word

without citing the author

to question. In view of the changing threats and requirements of human development and in the interest of a noticeable advancement of our own economy, science and culture

state, they considered it time to understand the political in its role in social life in a different way. The physicist – Professor Dr. Max Steenbeck, then chairman of the Research Council – said:

"Today, politics is no longer the art of the possible, but the science of what is necessary." The politician - Walter Ulbricht, then chairman of the State Council - quoted the sentence sympathetically.<sup>1</sup>

Apparently something was bothering the two of them, something that people eager for social progress are often confronted with. In relation to what would have to be done to achieve peace

between peoples and states, to ensure social justice and ecologically responsible use of natural resources, the willingness to act accordingly is too low. It is understood that Steenbeck, like Ulbricht, was aware that the profit-oriented economy in countries with capital power, the actions of the associations, parties, parliaments and governments that support this power bear the main causal responsibility for the failures that threaten current and future life on earth. But they also recognized that in the countries that had actually competed, the old system

to break out, the bureaucratic shackles of economic processes and social development were involved in the failures, and not somehow, but also causally. They strived to get out of there. In practical politics since the beginning of the 1960s, a new economic system of planning and management has overcome centralized rigidity. However, these efforts were increasingly slowed down by the end of the decade.

So one can ask oneself: were the words spoken by Steenbeck and Ulbricht at that time about the science of necessity?

to resist braking? Was the political science meditation a kind of theoretical accompanying text to these processes?

The broader questions are: What could be achieved in the specific situation and what could actually be achieved with the envisaged redefinition of the concept of politics? Paying greater attention to scientific research into what is necessary as a policy component was a sensible approach. But taking this opportunity to erase the reference to the possible in the understanding of politics and wanting to forego art as an element of making politics is

a mistake in both respects. Because: Shouldn't and shouldn't the more thorough knowledge of what is necessary, which can be acquired thanks to scientific research, arouse even greater interest in the relationship between what is necessary and what is possible, trigger greater efforts to uncover real possibilities and the diverse struggle for their transformation into reality almost inspiring?



Could it be that Comrade Ulbricht, who knew Lenin personally, forgot Lenin for a moment in view of Steenbeck's impressive sentence? In Lenin's

In the book about left-wing radicalism there is an explanation that he asked the British comrade W. Gallacher from Glasgow, whom Ulbricht also knew, to consider when it came to politics, namely: "that politics is a science and art that does not fall from heaven, which is not something you are born with, and that when the proletariat wants to defeat the bourgeoisie, it has its own, proletarian "Class politicians" must be produced, namely politicians who must not be worse than the bourgeois politicians."<sup>2</sup> Not worse? So better, we say to ourselves. More creative

This includes ingenuity, imagination for variants and alternatives, spontaneous reactions in dealing with circumstances and opportunities, a feeling for moods and balances of power, insightful persuasiveness, which not least includes a sense of nuances, nuances in mentalities and characters, nuances in colors and words, tones and tones - as is well known, a high proportion of the information content of a statement lies in the intonation of what is said or what is to be said. To gain confidants and allies and to set something in motion with them that is recognized as necessary

bring can work so well. Regarding the differences that exist between artistic work and political action, which must be taken into account with care, socialists should not underestimate the similarities between work in politics and art, but rather shape them as a productive interrelationship.

Deep democratic and socialist convictions as well as the courage and courage to represent them and live them themselves characterize the women and men who act in the interest of a socially just, free existence for their fellow human beings. Politicians of the capital power servant type can be recognized by the fact that

that they exercise and exhaust their art in the struggle to acquire power, maintain power and eliminate political competitors. Politicians of the people-servant type characterize democratic attitudes. Uwe-Jens Heuer formulated something valid about their definition in his 1989 book on democracy ("Marxism and Democracy"), which he reproduces in a self-quote at the end of his recently published book on faith ("Marxism and Faith").

I consider these three sentences as a VADEMECUM LEFT POLITICIAN.

They are:

»Democratic attitude demands

Willingness to take risks, demands taking responsibility, not for the actions of others, but for one's own actions, demands insight into what is possible and not possible, demands willingness to learn and tolerance, and the ability to endure contradictions and conflicts. A democrat must have the courage to express his own opinion and the willingness to listen to and think through the opinions of others, to respect them but also to fight them. He must respect the will of the majority, but also contradict it if it contradicts the interests of the majority or the interests of a minority that should be respected.

Walter Ulbricht: Basic tasks in 1970, Berlin 1969, p. 17

WI Lenin: "Left radicalism", the childhood illness in communism, in: Selected works in six volumes, Vol. V, Berlin 1971, p. 533

Siegfried Lorenz

Friend of youth and sport

Siegfried Lorenz, born in 1930, elementary school, apprenticeship as a mechanic, Workers' and Farmers' Faculty (ABF), studied at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, qualified in social sciences, 1945 SPD, 1946 SED, department head in the Central Council of the FDJ, 1961 first secretary of the FDJ district leadership in Berlin, from 1963 to 1990 member of the People's Chamber of the GDR, from 1966 to

1976 Chairman of the Youth Committee of the People's Chamber. From 1966 to 1976 head of the youth department in the SED Central Committee, candidate since 1967 and member of the SED Central Committee since 1971, 1st secretary of the SED district leadership in Karl-Marx-Stadt from 1976 to 1989. Candidate in 1985 and from 1986 to December 1989 member of the Politburo of the SED Central Committee.

As an ABF student, you took part in a central conference of the FDJ in November 1950, where Walter Ulbricht called on the youth to form one

To lead a "campaign to conquer science and culture".

Do you remember?

It was my first encounter with Walter Ulbricht. I sat in the presidium and was able to look at his speech manuscript from there and also watched as he took notes on each contribution to the discussion.

Only a year had passed since the GDR was founded. On his initiative, the People's Chamber passed the "Law on the Participation of Youth in the Building of the German Democratic Republic and the Promotion of Youth in School and Work, in Sport and Recreation". The political participation of young people was important

attention of the new state at the top. For the first time in Germany, young people were allowed to vote at the age of 18. Critics said the young people weren't ready for it yet. Ulbricht countered: Anyone who is forced into war at the age of 18 also has the right to choose their future in peace.

The right to work and education had already been achieved.

Youth unemployment was a thing of the past. Equal pay for equal work was no longer a foreign concept for young people. What was also significant for me was that the workers' and farmers' faculties opened the way to universities for us.

In the best sense of the word, there was a great atmosphere of optimism. Under these circumstances, Ulbricht's speech made a formative impression on me. He clearly stated that anyone who does not know the way forward is like a blind man who is struggling to find his way with a stick.

What was important to him was the unity of technical and political training. And he railed against any "distraction from studies." He criticized the frequent work and agitation missions in which students were used and, frankly, we sometimes did

completed enthusiastically. He demanded: Nobody has the right to recall students from lectures and seminars for other purposes. The main task, especially of the children of workers and farmers, at universities and colleges is: Learn, learn and learn again! I internalized that after Ulbricht's speech.

I was amazed at the time by what he said about the relationship between students and middle-class scientists. Some listeners, who were a bit of a sectarian bent, didn't like it at all. How did you take this?

As a 20-year-old, I also have this

Passages received ambiguously. At the ABF we had experienced lecturers, teachers of the old school with humanistic attitudes and a high level of specialist knowledge. We owe them a lot. For example, through them I found access to classical German literature and with their help I penetrated the secrets of the natural sciences. They, in turn, appreciated our thirst for knowledge.

On the other hand, we were not unaware of derogatory statements made by professors and lecturers, who in no way felt that we were "intruding" into their academic spheres

approved. In their understanding, we didn't belong there.

We met the old academic customs and traditions, which we mostly didn't like very much and would have liked to replace with "proletarian traditions," with the same rejection. But Ulbricht noticeably slowed us down and demanded that we still show the necessary respect to professors and lecturers who did not share our worldview. Despite its reservations about our politics, the GDR would do everything it could to improve its material living conditions. Even if today

Some of them made malicious comments about us and about the GDR, in a few years they would be convinced that our path was the right one. Ulbricht was visibly filled with optimism.

I confess that back then I did not fully grasp the fundamentals of dealing with bourgeois scientists.

You had been an FDJ official in Berlin since 1954. There were youth forums "An answer to every question" that were known throughout the republic and other interesting events. Ulbricht took part in many of them. And he was passionate about sports. You have when I me

I remember that I also played volleyball against him. What was he like as an athlete?

Active and fair. As is well known, he had his roots in the workers' sports movement. The "Olympia Meeting Point" was created in Berlin during my time. Here, top athletes from the GDR met with young people and played sports together. Walter Ulbricht and Alfred Neumann took part in one of these meetings. Both of them not only talked about the importance of sport, but also took part in it. Alfred Neumann competed with the GDR shot put champion and smashed the ball over the one for us at the time

unattainable width of over 14 meters. Walter Ulbricht played volleyball. His request

"Every man, every place: exercise once a week" is something he not only announced at this meeting, but also took to heart.

In winter I saw Walter Ulbricht on the ice rink in Pankow, doing laps with his wife Lotte. I met him in Oberwiesenthal as he skied down the large slope on Fichtelberg. I know that he practiced weaving with the GDR alpine skiing champion, Eberhard "Ebs" Riedel. Without a doubt it was for Walter Ulbricht

Playing sports is a necessity from a young age.

And what about the youth forums?

Walter Ulbricht had a keen sense for new, interesting forms of youth work. He encouraged us accordingly. However, he also made sure that everything was in the

"right direction" was running. When I spoke at an SED conference about new forms of youth work, he interrupted me. He said that some of our initiatives were new, but he doubted whether they were "right".

This also included the youth forums, which were not unrestricted

met with applause. Young people lined up to get into the hall and the response was huge. Of course, the events were driven by personalities like Gerhart Eisler, who took part in all the forums and, with his humor and quick wit, never missed an answer. He knew how to skillfully parry even provocations.

That was always well received.

However, Walter Ulbricht said that no one can have an answer to every question. You have to recruit experts who would give concrete answers to specific questions at thematic forums. This inevitably led to a narrowing of the content.

And another fact caused him to criticize. The border in Berlin was open. So visitors from West Berlin came and tried to disrupt the forums by asking provocative questions and forcing discussions on us that we didn't need.

The FDJ shouldn't put up with that, he said. At some point, these central youth forums were replaced by thematic ones, which I was not the only one to regret.

In 1961 we were both first district secretaries of the FDJ, you in Berlin and I in Rostock. At the beginning of July, Horst Schumann called me. The 1st

Secretary of the FDJ Central Council

instructed me to track you down at a campsite in the Rostock district where you were on vacation with your family. You should come back to Berlin immediately because there was to be a rally with Walter Ulbricht on August 14, 1961. What was it like back then? It was decided by the Politburo of the SED Central Committee that a rally would take place on Potsdamer Platz on August 14, 1961. This decision more than surprised us. In the summer of 1961, events in and around Berlin came to a head. Dissatisfied with the situation in the GDR and the promises of the West

Following this, numerous citizens left the GDR. In Berlin we had to deal with the so-called cross-border commuter problem, That is, some Berliners went to work in West Berlin and lived in the eastern part of the city and benefited from the fraud course. A nuisance that angered many a capital city resident.

In this situation, the decision was made to hold a youth rally with Walter Ulbricht on the occasion of the 90th.

Karl Liebknecht's birthday. Liebknecht gave his well-known anti-war speech on Potsdamer Platz in 1916, after which he was imprisoned and declared a traitor

was convicted.

The planned event not only ended my vacation, but also gave me sleepless nights. The location right on the sector border didn't seem particularly suitable for rallies to me.

Because of the measures taken on August 13, 1961, the planned event fell through. The Politburo minutes from those days stated succinctly: "The decision to hold a youth rally in Berlin is revoked." We later suspected that the whole thing was a diversionary tactic. Today we know that the border security measures will come into effect on the 13th.

In August 1961, neither Walter Ulbricht nor anyone else in the party leadership could have been known at the time the decision was made about the youth rally. The decision was made in Moscow in the first week of August.

In preparation for the VI. At the party conference in 1963, Walter Ulbricht invited six FDJ officials to his place. He began the meeting by saying that he was an old man, but should also speak to the youth at the party conference. That's why he wants to know exactly what the young people think and what they expect from the party conference. You and I were there then. contemporary witnesses say,

that such rounds were part of Ulbricht's working style. Can you confirm it?

This style of work impressed me. His frequently used phrase

"Let's talk about it openly" made it clear from the outset that he wasn't interested in sugar-coated reports, but rather about problems and useful suggestions. A consultation in the summer of 1963 to prepare the youth communiqué was no different. Other Politburo members, ministers, scientists, company managers, journalists and we FDJ officials were present. Walter Ulbricht arrived without further ado

to the matter and stated that the conversion of youth work was not progressing quickly enough and the main problems were not being sufficiently discussed.

In the debate that followed, different views on youth problems were discussed, some of which were contradictory. Ulbricht, who limited himself to intermittent questions, finally announced that the Politburo would once again deal with youth issues. A youth communiqué is planned; the youth commission will report directly to the Politburo and to him personally. Under the leadership of Kurt Turba, editor-in-chief of

Student newspaper forum, a working group should formulate a draft that should be presented to the Politburo.

It was noticeable that Ulbricht did not rely primarily on the party apparatus - as was often the case - but on journalists, especially from the youth press, on people from the field and on selected youth officials such as Horst Schumann and me. At this point I still had no idea about Walter Ulbricht's far-reaching intentions and ideas. They were involved in the development and introduction of the New Economic System of Planning and

management together. He considered young people to be particularly open to implementing this reform concept. However, this required a new style in youth work, a higher intellectual level, the acquisition of the necessary specialist knowledge and applicable knowledge, inventiveness, and the overcoming of dogmatism and formalism. And of course a strong connection among all young people to the socialist fatherland and its perspective. I know from Kurt Turba, whom I knew well from working together in the FDJ Central Council, that he had great support from Walter Ulbricht when developing the draft

was in close contact with him and was encouraged by him. This is how the youth communiqué was created, which differed significantly from previous resolutions on youth in language and style and was aimed directly at young people. In 1963 you gave the opening speech at the Berlin youth rally at the Central Club of Youth and Athletes in the sports hall on Karl-Marx-Allee, at which Walter Ulbricht founded the youth communiqué. Yes, there was a great atmosphere there. Several thousand young people crowded into the hall, and Walter Ulbricht began his speech by asking whether the...

Young people like him would find the youth communiqué great. The response was an enthusiastic "yes." In his speech, he described the document as clear and purposeful. The party knows the problems of the youth and would tackle them. He emphasized several times that young people must learn to think independently and work creatively and adopt the socialist point of view themselves, because, as he quoted the communiqué, "you will be the masters of the house in the last decades of this century." At the same time, he always linked this to the responsibility that young people have to take on today.

Referring to the New Economic System of planning and management of the national economy that is being prepared, he called for the

to get to know the "objective laws of social development" and to exploit and apply them. Ulbricht repeatedly referred to examples of how young people fought for "world level" and brought about technical innovations, how they successfully led large economic entities as "captains" and were at the top of the competition in youth brigades.

At the same time, his speech contained many critical tones. So he polemicized against

"Remnants of dogmatism" and "soulless administration". That must be overcome.

He repeatedly deviated from the prepared concept to answer questions. So the speech got longer and longer.

Too long for a rally. At the end of his remarks, however, everyone sat up and listened once again when Ulbricht, already 70 years old, discussed the strange description of certain young people as "young boys." Berliners said snidely about such young people:

"get the job done and get nothing done."

But there was more to it. Young people often became derogatory

named those who deviated from the norm in their way of life, behaved rebelliously and rebelliously and with whom there were difficulties. Behind this was a facet of the generational conflict. Because they were labeled, access to these young people was made more difficult and sometimes even blocked. Ulbricht said: "We don't know this word, we don't know any young people of this character, we only know young people and the duty ... to help them develop and move forward." That is the main thing. Some contemporary historians and contemporary witnesses are now of the opinion that Ulbricht was

encountered resistance in the Politburo with his ideas on youth policy. They suggest that a faction in the Politburo has watered down the spirit of the youth communiqué and see a connection between the failure of the New Economic System and youth policy. Is this perception justified or is it not rather a subsequent interpretation?

As long as I have been involved in youth policy, I have known different opinions and ideas about how best to reach young people. There were also these differences of opinion

between leading people whose biographies sometimes show very different experiences and the resulting conclusions. I can't see any faction activity in this; apart from that, according to the statutes, faction activity in the SED was punished with exclusion. When there were changes in policy and new challenges, youth policy always came into play, and we experienced many a turnaround. At that time, I know that there were quite a few voices who, for example, described the role of the FDJ in the youth communiqué as underexposed, which later even became one

The FDJ was downgraded. In the

In my opinion, the correct view that young people should not be judged by their appearance - clothing, fashion, dances or hairstyles - led some to sense the danger that this would open the door to "Western unculture and decadence".

The topic of youth and music remained a constant topic of conflict. Of the

Ulbricht initially didn't think much of the "beat wave" that came out of the airwaves in the 1960s and was very well received by young people; this music ("the monotony of yeah, yeah, yeah") was suspicious to him. Nevertheless, he also said, "the beat to which the youth dances,

"It's her business, the main thing is that she remains tactful." However, the slogan "Youth - the landlord of tomorrow" was condemned because it was exaggerated and made the youth arrogant, possibly provoked a "generational conflict" and called into question "the leading force of the working class and its party."

Regardless, the communiqué sparked an upsurge among the youth that had not been seen in a long time.

Countless meetings of young people with factory managers, ministers, artists and scientists enriched intellectual life. New and diverse

Forms of leisure activities that met the needs of young people were very popular. The Germany meeting in 1964 showed politically committed, self-confident youth who also proved what they were capable of in cultural and sporting terms. The youth station DT 64 went on the air at that time and became the most popular and most listened to station in the GDR.

As far as I know, the Politburo unanimously assessed this development very positively. Later disputes about youth policy such as those on September 11th

Plenum of the Central Committee at the end of 1965, after leaving office as first secretary

FDJ in Berlin in mid-1965 was no longer directly experienced.

In the spring of 1966, a commission was set up under the leadership of Horst Sindermann and Kurt Hager, to which I was also appointed. She had to prepare a Politburo resolution on youth policy issues. As always, he primarily addressed the leadership of the party, the state and the economy, the FDJ and other social organizations. Without critically mentioning or overruling the youth communiqué, the resolution emphasized the

"class-based education of youth" and the role of the FDJ as "helpers and

Party reserves". The principle

"Trust and responsibility in young people" remained untouched and remained unchanged. It was even spelled out in far more detail and specificity than in previous decisions. Chaired by Walter Ulbricht, the Politburo unanimously approved the decision without objection.

In 1970, a delegation of the Young Socialists in the SPD, led by Karsten D. Voigt, who later became foreign policy spokesman for the SPD parliamentary group in the Bundestag, visited the FDJ. The Jusos delegation was received by Walter Ulbricht. You were there. Karsten Voigt, with whom I am

I recently discussed this event, took part in this meeting, although there was considerable resistance from the SPD party executive.

Why did Ulbricht receive the delegation?

To my knowledge, this was the first delegation of the Young Socialists to come to the GDR. Such a step was still bold back then. Relations with the GDR have been criminalized since 1949. Teachers and other civil servants were threatened with professional bans if they traveled to the GDR. Walter Ulbricht had read about the upcoming visit in the newspaper and then called me on the ZK's internal telephone line.

"What do you think," he asked, "if I received the delegation?"

I was speechless for a moment. Neither the FDJ nor the youth department in the Central Committee even thought of arranging a meeting with the head of state and party leader. Ulbricht helped me get over my astonishment.

All forces in the Federal Republic of Germany that advocate détente must be supported, he explained. The GDR must fight Strauss and von Thadden and promote Brandt's Eastern policy. The West German population must be won over to a common policy of democratic progress. He wanted to discuss this with the young socialists, because they

are very active.

I supported his reasoning. However, he suggested that the meeting should not be organized in the State Council or the Central Committee, but rather that it take place in the guest house on the Spree. We should not get the Jusos into political difficulties by inviting them to the Central Committee building.

Karsten Voigt still had problems with his comrades. The SPD party executive and also representatives of the federal executive committee of the Young Socialists put unusual pressure on him to turn down Ulbricht's invitation. Then everyone

Arguments didn't work, people in the Bonn barracks<sup>1</sup> said that the delegation couldn't go to Ulbricht because the meeting was supposed to take place on June 17th.

However, Voigt had courage and ignored it. He was of the opinion that if you wanted the SPD's new Eastern policy, then you shouldn't turn down the invitation of the head of state of the GDR.

However, before the meeting began, there was a glitch on our side.

Günther Jahn, the first secretary of the FDJ, greeted Walter Ulbricht at the entrance and rode with him in the elevator. It got stuck. Ulbricht took it calmly, as Günther later said, and entertained

talk to him about microelectronics. The meeting after their liberation lasted just over two hours. My impressions were of course different than those of Karsten Voigt. Ulbricht took seriously what was enshrined in the 1968 constitution: The GDR is the socialist state of the German nation.

For him the national question was not closed. He also promoted the policies of the GDR among Social Democrats. He had no illusions about the SPD's intentions with the new Eastern policy. But everything that served peace was important to him. That was a lesson from the 77-year-old's life. You have the transition from Ulbricht to

Honecker experienced directly. Nowadays, some people, including some of the authors in this book, interpret this as an intrigue by a group around Erich Honecker. Can you really make things that easy?

This transition came as no surprise to me. At the end of the 1960s, the problems and difficulties in the economic development of the GDR increased noticeably. At the 14th Central Committee meeting in December 1970, the analysis showed that there had been disproportions in the national economy and that with the conclusion of the five-year plan there were significant backlogs and difficulties in supply

with raw materials and other materials. At the same time, there was increasing criticism from the population regarding care and social services.

These phenomena were rooted in the fact that the impact of the economic laws of socialism had been underestimated or misjudged. What remained publicly unsaid was that certain of Walter Ulbricht's bold goals had failed due to the reality that the New Economic System of planning and managing the national economy, which clearly bore Walter Ulbricht's signature, was canceled after Soviet interventions and

that Ulbricht's German policy concept no longer had the support of the Soviet leadership. So it was more than just a group intrigue. It was about new challenges, solving numerous complicated development problems and correcting course, which required a lot of strength and represented a very high hurdle for a 78-year-old. I therefore fully supported Ulbricht's request to the Central Committee to relieve him of his duties and place responsibility in younger hands; how I actually like remaining in functions to the highest

age was critical. I found the change necessary, logical and timely. How this happened in detail is another matter. I certainly have my critical comments.

A question that I ask everyone I talk to: If you look back and Walter Ulbricht goes into the conflict-rich history of...

20th century: What would you like to emphasize about it?

Walter Ulbricht and his life's work were not immune to errors, mistakes and serious defeats. However, I agree with the obituary from 1973 which said:

»Walter Ulbricht followed the path of a militant communist who served the working class and the working people with all his abilities and strength. His life filled with struggle was loyalty to Marxism-Leninism and self-sacrificing work for our socialist state." For me, he remains the "friend of youth and sport."

1 The SPD party headquarters. The party had acquired a barrack-like building in Bonn in 1951 and wanted to use it to underline the provisional nature of the situation; for the SPD, Berlin was the capital and therefore the only permissible seat of party leadership. The house was demolished in 1974 and the SPD headquarters moved to a new building, the Erich Ollenhauer House, the name "Bonn barracks" nevertheless remained a synonym for

the SPD leadership, and in 1999 the move to Berlin took place.

Klaus Eichler

"The hour of young engineers and skilled workers has come"

Klaus Eichler, born in 1939, born and grew up in Halle, chemical worker, FDJ 1954, SED 1962, 1st secretary of the FDJ district management of the Leuna-Werke "Walter Ulbricht" (1962-1964). Distance learning to become a chemical engineer and attending the "Karl Marx" party college. From 1965 to 1974 1st Secretary of the FDJ

District management Frankfurt/Oder, then (until 1984) general director of the FDJ travel agency "Jugendtourist" and distance learning at the Academy for Political and Legal Sciences. Vice President of the DTSB since 1984, succeeding Manfred Ewald as President in 1988. In February 1990 he founded the company Touristik und Kontakt International GmbH (tuk), which he led as managing director for many years.

The spring of 1963 was tough. The long and hard winter until April became a major challenge for the almost 30,000 working people

Leuna works "Walter Ulbricht". Extremely sub-zero temperatures caused the coal to get stuck in the wagons and the Saale iced over. Despite all efforts, the giant plant with its hundreds of kilometers of pipelines - the Soviet crude oil still came in tank cars - was unable to fulfill the plan in the first quarter. A bitter blow for the GDR economy. Fuels, fertilizers, glues, synthetic resins, catalysts, caprolactam for the production of synthetic fibers, pharmaceuticals... all essential. The Leuna II construction site, a future petrolchemical center in the GDR, was hit even harder. With completion

Work productivity was expected to be six times higher than in the Leuna factories and the products would be on a par with world standards. The backlog was considerable, with a delay of six weeks in the assembly of the platforms for the installation of the gasoline splitting system.

The year started off so promisingly. After intensive preparation and discussion of the draft program with large parts of the population, the VI. At the SED party conference, far-reaching resolutions were passed on the social and economic perspective of the GDR. The program of socialism took place among the

Working people, especially those around

8,000 young skilled workers and engineers, strong interest and approval. Understandably, the highlighted importance of the chemical industry and the decisive development of petrochemicals was an exciting perspective that shaped our work. Furthermore, even after the years of terrible experiences of war and hardship, there was a longing for a life in peace and social security, free from fear of tomorrow, for meaningful work and joy in life.

In the middle of the discussion, how to deal with

can agree with one's own demands and the fatal situation and the delay in the deadline could be made up for in a very short time, a visitor was announced: Walter Ulbricht wants to come on April 18th!

The largest industrial company in the GDR naturally received the highest attention from the country's political leadership. That's why Ulbricht came by regularly; this was his fifteenth visit to Leuna. However, the new plant director, a man in his mid-thirties, was as excited as I was, as he had a special responsibility with the FDJ on the "Large Youth Leuna II Construction Site."

The workers warmly greeted Walter Ulbricht, and you could see how happy he was to be "on site" again. We got down to business without a break or unnecessary rituals.

What amazed me was how he talked and listened. It seemed as if he was just following the leader's information out of politeness, but his questions showed that he was processing everything very carefully in his head. "Do the technical indicators of the new systems hold up in comparison to the data from the most modern companies in the world?" That could be parried. Then there was a problem.

"What about the labor productivity indicator?" The one on it

The following discussion was exciting, a debate about the best solutions.

During the subsequent tour of the construction site there was an interesting encounter with site manager Frank Schliephake. The 24-year-old qualified engineer introduced Walter Ulbricht to cycle and flow production based on uniform workflow plans for construction and assembly work, i.e. the cyclogram, and also articulated doubts and resistance. Ulbricht obviously liked that. Ulbricht ended the subsequent exchange of views with the remark: "It is the hour of young skilled workers and engineers

come, we said at the party conference. Here is the confirmation."

Schliephake, who was a member of our FDJ district leadership, was to be elected to the People's Chamber in October 1963.

At the next stations, Ulbricht asked: "Do you know the cyclogram, and what do your colleagues think about it?" A brigadier from the carpenters, type Balla from Erik Neutsch's still unwritten book

"Trail of the stones," said bluntly: the flow of material sometimes comes to a halt. The surrounding superiors didn't like hearing that, and they wanted to smooth things over a little. Ulbricht waved. Man

should take such information seriously and consider suggestions "with the greatest care." Every working person must have the feeling in their daily practice that the solution to the great task depends on their participation and their commitment.

And Ulbricht showed that these were very simple but essential questions. »How are the accommodations? How is the construction workers provided? How does it work in shift work?"

The carpenters said: Work, food and accommodation are okay, the wages are also good, but that is not enough

... Of course, the working person does not live by bread alone. Ulbricht

immediately understood what was meant. We received a reprimanding look. As a result, we found regulations on how temporary colleagues could participate in the company's important cultural and social offerings.

At the final meeting, Ulbricht reiterated the principle of maximum economic benefit in planning and managing economic processes. The conversations held on the construction site showed him that the material interests of the working people and their work collectives coincide with the interests of society

is becoming more and more the driving force of economic development. More than once he began a thought with the phrase "The new lies in this

..." with which he identified himself as a clear analyst who thought in a structured manner and was able to distinguish precisely between what was essential and what was secondary. He named key points and held back from making judgments. He didn't criticize, he recommended, he didn't instruct, he suggested. I liked that. However, he remained stubborn on one thing: for him, the comprehensive construction of socialism was not the task of the party, but a matter for all working people.

On June 30, on Walter Ulbricht's 70th birthday, Frank Schliephake reported that the plan had been fulfilled; the plant achieved 99.6 percent of the production plan with a seven percent increase in labor productivity.

## Economic reform

Harry Nick

Attempt at a thoroughgoing economic reform in the GDR

Harry Nick, born in 1932, born and grew up in Silesia, moved to Mansfeld in 1945, worked as a rod puller in the Hettstedt rolling mill after graduating from high school, studied economics in Berlin-Karlshorst from 1951 to 1954, then worked at this university, received his doctorate in 1959, and habilitation in 1965. Employees at the institute

for social sciences at the Central Committee of the SED since 1962, lecturer from 1964, professor in 1967. Head of the research area "Economic and Social Problems of Scientific and Technical Progress" at the local Institute for Political Economy until 1990. National Prize 1979.

Ten years after Ulbricht's death, in 1983, I wrote the work "Karl Marx and the Shaping of the Developed Socialist Society in the GDR."<sup>1</sup> It appeared in seven languages and was presented to the participants of the SED Central Committee on the occasion of 100th anniversary of Marx's death

Presented at the international conference. This meeting was attended by leading representatives of the communist and workers' parties. Of course, the SED used this opportunity to present its socio-political concept. However, the party leadership did not expect my work to form a basis for discussion at this conference. At such conferences, monologues were held, not dialogues or even debates. The participants should at most be given reading material. Whether it was actually received is beyond my knowledge: there was no response to this writing - because

There was also no international debate about strategic fundamental questions of socialist development.

All programs of the parties ruling in the socialist countries were based on the ideas of Marx and Engels about the communist social formation. In the first phase, socialism, which still bears the birthmarks of the old society, the principle should apply: from each according to his abilities, to each according to his performance. In the second phase, communism, the principle should apply: from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs. According to the

According to the Soviet model, it was self-evident that after the end of the transition period - the transfer of the majority of industry into public ownership and the private farms into cooperative ownership - the transition to communism had to begin. Walter Ulbricht had the courage to resist this idea. After completing the socialist transformation, the SED proclaimed the "comprehensive construction of socialism" and later "the shaping of the developed socialist society".

That was a clear affront to

the CPSU, which Walter Ulbricht later also failed.

My personal experiences with Walter Ulbricht exclusively concerned his critical comments on drafts in which I was involved. They were all momentous. They testified not only to Ulbricht's great theoretical interest, but also to a deep theoretical understanding and a solid Marxist education. But also from the fact that Walter Ulbricht, as party and state leader, claimed the decisive say on important socio-political issues. This also affected the right to express oneself

to express socio-political questions in a textbook manner.

I learned this for the first time as a co-author of the book "Transition Period in the GDR," which was published by lecturers at the Institute of Political Economy at the University of Economics in Die Wirtschaft in 1962. A representative of Comrade Ulbricht informed us that this book would be withdrawn from the market because it contained a serious political error in that it distorted the SED's alliance policy towards private entrepreneurs.

Specifically, it was the statement that the state participation

in such companies represents a transitional form to public ownership.

The fact that this sentence was found in the law on state participation did not help us.

What it was really about was revealed in the fate of another book in which I was involved as an author. In 1967, the book "The Political Economy of Socialism – Its Application in the GDR" was published by Dietz Verlag, written by lecturers from the Institute for the Political Economy of Socialism at the Academy of Social Sciences at the ZK

the SED. The title of the book should also express that the authors based themselves on the experiences of the GDR and did not present a general theory of political economy.

Walter Ulbricht said that for precisely this reason such a work should not be written by authors from one institute alone, but by the most competent experts in our country. In order to accommodate the authors and counteract the impression that they had worked for the wastebasket, their texts were published in very small editions with the note: "Printed as a manuscript". Meanwhile there was a new one



A collective of authors, it was led by Günter Mittags, who, together with Erich Apel, had designed the New Economic System of Planning and Management and had been a member of the Politburo since 1966. As expected, Ulbricht contributed the foreword. Ulbricht had high expectations for scientific and technical progress. He was convinced that socialism and the scientific and technological revolution were quasi allies, mutually promoting the development of their potential and demonstrating the superiority of socialism. Special

He paid attention to the developing complex systems of flexible automation. They enabled the complete machining of complicated workpieces in one clamping using various manufacturing processes (turning, milling, drilling, etc.). This also allowed automation in the areas of medium, small and even one-off production. The GDR had made good progress in the development and use of such flexible automation solutions for material processing. The idea of presenting this internationally is understandable. This is how the idea of one came about

permanent industrial exhibition of the GDR, analogous to the International Agricultural Exhibition in Leipzig/Markkleeberg. For this exhibition, buildings and pavilions were erected on an extensive forest site near Berlin's Wuhlheide and Köpenick train stations. Graphics and tables with detailed explanations should be shown in the first exhibitions. Two days before the planned opening, Walter Ulbricht decided that there would be no industrial exhibition, but instead an "Academy for Marxist-Leninists

"Organizational Science" (AMLO), a conglomerate of cybernetics, operations research, management sciences and the like that has yet to be clarified. The AMLO was supposed to be something like the scientific center for the modernization of the GDR economy. The facility, like the "system automation," was a striking example of exaggerated, unrealistic ideas about economic development in the GDR. In practice, it meant concentrating resources on cutting-edge technologies and neglecting economic ones

Broad modernization was also one of the reasons why Walter Ulbricht was replaced by Erich Honecker in 1970. After this replacement, there was no longer any mention of AMLO or the GDR industrial exhibition. The Ministry of Science and Technology, its research center and other departments moved into the buildings intended for this purpose.

Walter Ulbricht's greatest achievement was undoubtedly his attempt at a thoroughgoing economic reform "New Economic System" (NÖS). There his wisdom and foresight as well as his were particularly evident

Method.

In September 1962, Pravda published an article by the Soviet economist Yevsei G. Liberman under the heading "Plan, Profit and Bonus." In it, the author castigated the orientation of economic development towards volume growth ("ton ideology") as well as the neglect of efficiency and quality. The Soviet leadership took no notice of this criticism. Economic reformers in other socialist countries followed suit and continued to debate plan and market. These debates did not get to the heart of the problem

an outdated, ineffective economic mechanism existed. Ulbricht recognized this.

In the phase of industrialization, when every new chimney on a previously green field was celebrated as socialist progress and heralded economic strengthening, quantitative growth, predominantly achieved on an extensive scale, was definitely important. The decisions about the locations for new operations and the associated infrastructure were made by the headquarters from an overall economic perspective. Only state funds were considered as sources of financing. Headquarters

Economic control, planning and control has definitely proven its worth in the industrialization phase.

After the end of the Civil War, Soviet steel production was less than one percent of US steel production. After the end of the World War in 1946, it was 40 percent,

In 1970 it was already 120 percent. In the meantime, however, something else was crucial: How much utility value - for example in terms of machinery - could be extracted from a ton of steel? This called for a fundamental economic change, the change in the type of reproduction,

the transition to intensively expanded reproduction. However, the modernization of existing companies could of course best be managed internally and not from outside. Depending on the funds you generate yourself.

The Soviet leadership, however, remained committed to the idea of extensive economic growth. This also explains the unrealistic goals of economic competition with the USA, as set out by the XXII. Congress of the CPSU in October 1961 decided.

Walter Ulbricht immediately took Liberman's article as an opportunity to open the Academy for

To commission social sciences to investigate similar problems in the GDR economy. The assignment ended up in our Institute of Political Economy. After extensive discussions with numerous business officials and company directors, our chair and the four of us heads of department wrote an article entitled "Premiums for modern and outdated technology" on January 15th.

November 1962 in New Germany appeared.

Of course, according to Walter Ulbricht's understanding, such an important matter as the NÖS could not be held responsible

of a scientific institute. That is why it was announced in the introduction to our article that an economic conference on economic reform would take place in December 1962, for the preparation of which the State Planning Commission and the State Secretariat for Higher Education would be responsible. The central committee and government took over the further development of the NÖS. The fact that companies and combines generate the resources for expanded reproduction themselves should not preclude overall economic control. The state would through

differentiated long-term norms of profit transfer and create an overall economic structural policy through investments. However, no practical experience could be gained because there was no in-house production of this kind.

Every year, the companies were given new planning tasks and resources allocated.

The New Economic System failed in its central idea for political reasons. It would have meant that - as was previously the case - 80 percent of the investments were under the control of the state and 20 percent were under the control of the companies

but that this relationship should have been reversed. But such strong individual power on the part of companies contradicted the centralized structure of the political system.

It is not known whether Walter Ulbricht could have overcome this system and whether he even wanted to. His behavior at the 11th Central Committee Plenum in December 1965, which resulted in an intensification of the centralist elements not only in the cultural sector, does not suggest this.

In any case, the ideas of the NÖS remain an important tool when considering an economic model

beyond capitalism.

1 In this context I consider a reference to the use of the words

"Socialism" and "socialist" are appropriate. In West German parlance, Hitler and his fascist hordes are called socialists (without quotation marks). They call Walter Ulbricht, who deserved the name "socialist," a "Stalinist." They call the political system of the Nazi Empire by the proper name chosen by the fascists themselves, "National Socialism." And they are not ashamed and ignore the fact that they are the only ones in the world who call German fascism "National Socialism."

The political system of the GDR and the other socialist states was not granted the proper name they chose. They are not called "socialism" and "socialist," but rather "Stalinism" and

"Stalinist." The one for the period after

XX. Common term at the 1956 Party Congress of the CPSU

"De-Stalinization" – which did not just mean renaming towns and streets – is unusual in this country. The shadow of Stalin's crimes should be spread over the socialist countries. There was bad and good in the GDR, "but structurally" it was Stalinist. The rejection of Stalinism was part of the basic consensus of the PDS and can be heard again and again. If the social system of the fallen European socialism is to be defined with the name of a person - a unique case in historiography anyway - then why the name of Stalin? And not Marx's? Because then

"Stalinism" would be lost as an anti-socialist fighting term.

Eberhard Fensch

The new economic system and journalistic work

Eberhard Fensch, born in 1929, studied journalism, worked as a company newspaper editor at the Mathias Thesen shipyard in Wismar in 1953, 1956

Rostock station, 1961 Radio GDR, 1968 employee of the agitation department of the SED Central Committee headed by Werner Lamberz. As deputy department head responsible for television and radio in the GDR.

Eberhard Fensch has lived on Usedom since the 90s.

I had my first personal encounter with Walter Ulbricht in 1963, about fifty years ago. That's why I can't remember the date, but I can remember the atmosphere in which our conversation took place.

At that time I was head of the economics department of Radio GDR, i.e. in a position in which I did not come into contact with the head of state of the GDR, apart from when he toured the trade fair in Leipzig and there only as part of the entourage. So I was surprised when one day I saw one

I received an invitation to a meeting with Walter Ulbricht in the SED Central Committee – for an "exchange of ideas on current economic issues," as I read. This in itself was unusual, as none of the fifteen or so professional colleagues from various media outlets who had received an invitation like me could remember having a direct conversation with him.

This meeting was different than I expected. No trace of protocol or distance. And, in contrast to his image, I experienced an extremely relaxed and tidy Walter Ulbricht. He said he wanted to talk to us first

inform about the upcoming fundamental decision in the party's economic policy, about the project of a new economic system for planning and managing the economy of the GDR. Although the planned economy, in particular the overall planning of economic

processes, has fundamentally proven itself, companies were given far too little personal responsibility and decision-making power. That above all should be changed, because it is better to make decisions locally than in a more central location

Job.

The barrel ideology must also be overcome and replaced by a stronger focus on work efficiency. It is not the quantity, and certainly not the quantity alone, that is the decisive indicator, but rather the labor productivity.

Enforcing this spirit at all levels of economic life - from the brigade to the ministries and the State Planning Commission - is now the most important task in the political work of the party and of course the media.

He wanted to win us over for this, that was his concern in this consultation, and

he asked us to express our opinion unvarnished.

But in doing so, he was running into an open door for us journalists, because we were constantly on the move in the companies, so we knew how long overdue a change of course towards more productivity and independence of the companies was. So we only gave our consent, enriched with concrete examples and evidence of the correctness of the intended measures.

I also spoke up. But that also means, I said, that public criticism of incorrect behavior is no longer taboo for us journalists

should be if our work is to bring benefit.

To my surprise, Ulbricht explicitly said yes, thereby giving us more scope for effective business journalism, at least for a while.

However, this ended again when, to my great regret, the New Economic System of planning and management was no longer continued in the early 1970s when Walter Ulbricht left active politics.

Regardless, this advice was extremely stimulating for us journalists and inspired our editorial team to write a whole series

of new forms of broadcasting. So the campaign "From the penny to the mark", a series of reports on the problem of effectiveness with extremely critical contributions, documentaries such as "Is creativity the privilege of an elite?", together with leading sociologists of the GDR, or "Is competition a compulsory exercise?" together with the FDGB. Or scenic portraits of pioneers of the effectiveness movement under the motto "Witnessed and recorded". In addition, the discussion group "Consultation Hours for the Future", together with GDR television.

And finally, the television play "The Uncomfortables" that I wrote, which sparked a broad discussion in the companies.

It was the most productive period of my journalistic career. I owe this not least to the suggestions I received from Walter Ulbricht.

Günther Jahn

The NÖS is proof of socialism's ability to reform

Günther Jahn, born in 1930, 1946 FDJ and SED. After graduating from high school in Erfurt, studied economics in Jena and Berlin.

Worked in the planning and finance department in the Central Committee of the SED, in the meantime an aspirant and doctorate for a Dr. rer. oec. with a work on economic councils and socialist reconstruction in the GDR industry. 1965/66 Head of

"Socialist Economic Management" working group. In 1966 he became second secretary and in 1967, as Horst Schumann's successor, first secretary of the Central Council of the FDJ (until 1973). His successor was Egon Krenz. From 1976 to 1989, first secretary of the Potsdam district leadership of the SED. Member of the People's Chamber from 1967 to 1990, he was a member of the SED Central Committee from 1967 to 1989.

A sunny working day in the spring of 1963. As usual, I'm sitting at my desk in the room of the head of the "Socialist" working group, a little late

Economic Management" in the Central Committee. The phone rings, it's the Ulbricht secretariat, I should be with the first secretary at 8 a.m. please. I take my service notebook, a bound notebook in DIN A4 format, the use of which is mandatory in such cases and is considered confidential information (VVS). I rush from the fourth to the second floor. His secretary greets me with a friendly smile, a good omen. She leads me into his workroom, past a large table with around 50 books, the latest new releases from all GDR publishers. Then I stand in front of him for the first time: my highest boss in the central office

Party apparatus.

Brief greeting with a handshake. I am surprised that my direct superior, Central Committee Secretary Günter Mittag<sup>1</sup>, is not present.

So this will be a one-on-one conversation.

"I asked you to come to me," Walter Ulbricht begins, "so that you can inform me about the status of the new economic system and how it should continue."

I'm relieved. When it comes to this topic, I'm fairly well versed in the material and don't have to fear embarrassment.

First of all, I will report that we, together with the Planning and Finance Department, are submitting a submission to the Politburo

will submit. In it we propose convening a joint economic conference between the Central Committee and the Council of Ministers. Afterwards, a multi-day seminar with all responsible economic cadres at the central and district management levels is planned in Rostock-Warnemünde. This seminar should then be continued in all circles. And a central institute for socialist economic

management would soon be opened at the Central Committee of the SED, headed by Prof. Dr. Helmut Koziol, an internationally recognized scientist with a particular focus on national income

made a name. I would also venture to comment that Comrade Koziol recently declared in a lecture to party activists: "Unfortunately, some leaders have greater inventiveness when it comes to cheating than when it comes to economic progress." Ulbricht nods and a smile circles his goatee, as if he had been the model when the Sandman was created. Presumably because I (and to him unnecessarily) overemphasize leadership activity as a primary factor, he notes: "For training purposes, the numbering of the sub-complexes was for methodological reasons

their authorization. But that is the theory. In practice, it is important to introduce all complexes at the same time and not one after the other. This is the only way to make it a properly functioning system. That is the art of leadership.»

The NÖS seminar lasting several days finally took place in the fall of 1964. Günter Mittag is in charge, the socialist economic management working group is responsible for the content, and the Central Committee's Transport and Connections Department is responsible for the organization. In the evening of each seminar day, Mittag teaches on duty

Ulbricht by phone.

The economic secretaries of the district management, combine directors, party organizers, the heads of the district planning commissions, the district construction directors and the other seminar participants are interested and open-minded.

However, a shadow seems to be cast over the event when word leaks out that they will have to take a kind of written exam at the end, which these experienced personalities rightly consider to be unreasonable. They should be examined like students and answer questions such as: "What is a

optimal plan?" That was Mittag's idea, and the 38-year-old has stuck to this intention for a long time. But somehow I manage to get him to reverse this decision.

However, this battle turns out to be unnecessary. The seminar ends early and Ulbricht is ordered to Berlin at midday.

The reason for the termination is the news that in Moscow Khrushchev<sup>2</sup> surprisingly resigned from all his functions "for health reasons" and was replaced by Brezhnev<sup>3</sup>.

It doesn't take long before we notice that the wind is shifting and us

Berlin begins to blow in the face. And this is at the moment when we are preparing to put the new system into practice after theoretically developing it.

At the time it seemed to me as if the race for the new economic system of planning and management had already been stopped at the start. The paradox is that the NÖS is now being attacked with the same arguments with which it was initially justified. For example, it is now said that any kind of automatism is alien to socialism, and the higher the socialist consciousness, the better

be this for the socialist society and its economy. This commonplace has never been called into question by the NÖS.

The attacks from Moscow are aimed in particular at the complex of coordinated economic levers, deliberately ignoring the fact that these are only one element of the system and are interlinked with the other components. This is not a basis for a scientific discussion. The move away from the NÖS is forced by two wrong decisions in which its inventor unintentionally participates. Walter Ulbricht's orientation, cybernetics in economic management

and even including them in party work not only comes as a surprise to business cadres and party officials, but is also excessive. Hardly anyone can do anything with the nature of cybernetics, the categories and criteria. Mixed with the ignorance is also uncertainty and concern about one's own job; the instinctive rejection is also transferred to the entire concept of the NÖS. When in June 1966 the cadre leader of the Central Committee apparatus, Fritz Müller, declared at a staff meeting that current and future party workers »even without cybernetic knowledge

"urgently needed," there is applause.

And the second mistake is probably the creation of the formula

»Overtaking without catching up«. I know what it means, that, to put it simply, we shouldn't imitate everything the West does, and in essence that's true. But the twist gives rise to scorn and ridicule from friends and foes alike and objectively discredits Ulbricht and the NÖS.

Of course, this could have been avoided and probably repaired if Günter Mittag, who has a keen sense for changing winds, had not pursued his own interests.

He pushes the formation of large economic units, of combines, which he actually subordinates to himself politically. This is the best form of organization for a command economy, which is exactly the opposite of what the NÖS wants. And scientific management activities were soon replaced by "narrative seminars" at midday, at which combine directors were scolded by midday and forced to write declarations of commitment, reports of success and addresses of devotion.

At the 8th Party Congress in 1971 the term "New Economic System" was used

"management and planning" not once. This concept never existed, although it had been decided two party congresses earlier by most of the delegates who are now sitting in the hall again. In the Central Committee's annual report, Ulbricht's successor explained: "We only know one goal that permeates the politics of our party: to do everything for the good of the people, for the happiness of the people, for the interests of the working class and all working people. That is the meaning of socialism. That's what we work and fight for."

Walter also has something different

Ulbricht didn't think it through and didn't do it. Now it says the unity of

Economic and social policy would not put people off until later ("The way we work today is how we will live tomorrow"), but they would be able to enjoy the socialist fruits of their labor today ("I'm doing something - I'm doing something for myself"). . As it soon becomes clear, we are consuming more than we could have afforded. And the gap between yield and consumption is constantly widening.

Whether the development would have been decidedly different if the NÖS had been fully enforced can only be answered speculatively. The

There is something tempting about the idea that the "policy of the main task" – the unity of economic and social policy – would have been successful if it had been flanked and stimulated by the NÖS. That chance didn't exist. So the truism applies: Nobody can fight for victory or place if they are not admitted to the competition.

Walter Ulbricht's particular strength was his ability to consult with scientists. Many of them were involved in the development of the NÖS. Someone who seemed rather modest and inconspicuous in the background was called Dr. Wolfgang Berger<sup>4</sup>. Since the founding of the central

Party apparatus, since 1953 he was the economic policy advisor to the First Secretary; previously he had headed the Planning and Finance Department of the Central Committee.

Ulbricht was the initiator and chief architect of the NÖS, Berger was a pioneer and idea generator. I had known Berger since 1954 from working together.

After we lost touch, he contacted me in the summer of 1991. He came over to me in Potsdam from his small village near Königs Wusterhausen. He was visibly affected by illness. We were both pretty much the last experts on the Lower Austrian region, he said, so we had to talk about it too

to report. Why, I asked, the head is off, no one cares about the hairstyle anymore.

Wolfgang Berger disagreed. »The New Economic System of planning and management is, firstly, part of the party's history, and secondly, it is an expression of socialism's ability to reform - even if those unwilling to reform and opponents of reform prevented it. We owe it to Walter Ulbricht to write it down!"

He was certainly right.

Günter Mittag (1926-1994), joined the KPD in 1945, worked in the party apparatus since 1947. 1958 Secretary of the Economic Commission at the Politburo, 1962 Central Committee member, 1963 Head of the Industrial and Construction Bureau

of the Central Committee. Together with Erich Apel he designed this at the VI. New economic system of planning and management approved by the party congress. Member of the Politburo in 1966, Central Committee Secretary for Economic Affairs from 1962 to 1973 and again from 1976. Member of the People's Chamber from 1963 to 1989, of the State Council (from 1979 to 1989), from 1982 to 1989 of the National Defense Council. In October 1989 he was relieved of all functions and on November 23, 1989 he was expelled from the SED. After a short period of custody, he was released for health reasons. An embezzlement lawsuit was dropped in 1992 for the same reasons.

Nikita S. Khrushchev (1894-1971), machinist, joined the Communist Party and the Red Army in 1918. Party official since 1925, first meeting with Stalin at the XIVth Party Congress in 1925. 1933 party leader in Moscow, member of the Central Committee of

1934 to 1966, member of the Politburo from 1939 to 1964. First Secretary of the Central Committee of the CP of Ukraine from 1938 to 1949, then, until 1953, Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU. From 1953 to 1964 First Secretary, since 1958 also Prime Minister of the USSR. Replaced as head of state and government on October 14, 1964.

Leonid I. Brezhnev (1906-1982), joined the CPSU in 1931, secretary of the Dnepropetrovsk Regional Committee in 1939, political commissar in the Great Patriotic War, from 1950 to 1952 first secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU of the Moldavian Soviet Republic. Since 1956 Central Committee Secretary and member of the Politburo. From 1960 to 1964 Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and thus Head of State of the Soviet Union. From 1964 First, since 1966 General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU. At the end of 1974, Brezhnev's doctors hired one

beginning of cerebral vascular calcification. In the last years of his life, Brezhnev suffered several strokes and heart attacks, which severely reduced his intellectual capacity. Nevertheless, he was always re-elected as Secretary General.

Wolfgang Berger (1921-1994), apprenticeship as a commercial employee in Leipzig, joined the KPD after being an American prisoner of war, studied economics at the University of Leipzig, received his doctorate, was a consultant in the main finance

department of the German Economic Commission and then worked as an economic policy employee in the government chancellery of the GDR. From 1951 to 1953 head of the Planning and Finance Department of the Central Committee of the SED and then (until 1971) personal advisor to Walter Ulbricht, then head of department in the State Central Administration for Statistics of the GDR.

Kurt Fenske

As an internationalist, Ulbricht wanted a strong, creative CMEA

Kurt Fenske, born in 1930, 1946 FDJ and SED, member of the Saxony regional leadership of the FDJ, then studied economics in Leipzig and at the University of Economics in Berlin (until 1954), political employee in the Central Committee of the SED from 1956 to 1959. From 1957 Until 1963 distance learning at the Technical University in Dresden, graduating as

Graduated in engineering economics, doctorate in 1969, worked in various foreign trade companies in various functions, for example in the AHB Food, where he was deputy general director in 1959, and from 1962 to 1967 general director of the AHB Elektrotechnik. Since 1967 Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade, from 1985 State Secretary and First Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade. From 1967 to 1990, member of the People's Chamber.

I first met Walter Ulbricht at the Leipzig Spring Fair in 1963, after studying economics. In the

Following the tour of the electrical industry exhibitions, a consultation took place with the general directors of industry and foreign trade as well as the responsible members of the state apparatus for this branch of industry.

This was an open exchange of ideas on the scientific and technical status of production. I was one of the youngest participants in the consultation. I was impressed by the logic with which the then 70-year-old presented his thoughts and put them up for discussion. He proved to be well informed and amazed me that he

was also able to listen well and reinforced or contradicted the arguments of others by asking questions.

This consultation was followed by a lively debate about the strategic goals defined by Ulbricht. An experienced foreign trader recounted a conversation between Ulbricht and Khrushchev a few years ago. It was about the need for joint efforts to develop microelectronics. The Soviet side had made it clear that it did not see this urgency. Ulbricht believed he had recognized the reason for the rejection:

»Nikita, look behind and next to you

you: all old men! Do you think they still understand modern computing?"

The USSR's reparations claims were justified as a certain compensation for the war damage. They placed an extraordinary burden on the GDR's economy, which was developing under difficult conditions. It is now known that Walter Ulbricht asked Stalin to stop the dismantling as early as February 1946. These and other interventions by Ulbricht did not lead to any change in Soviet reparation claims

GDR. It was not until August 1953, after the social unrest on June 17th, that a correction was made. In a government agreement it was declared that the GDR's reparations payments should be considered paid on December 31, 1953.

In this difficult post-war period, Walter Ulbricht showed himself to be an energetic organizer and an economist of particular stature. Together with Heinrich Rau and Bruno Leuschner, he developed the contours and principles of an economic development that would serve the people under the most complicated conditions. He was at the forefront of the creative forces

SED, which focused on dynamic growth of the national economy.

Solving such a truly gigantic task required the training of a young generation of economists. With his textbook for democratic state and economic development, published in 1949, Walter Ulbricht created an effective basis for the training of a generation of economists who successfully helped shape the GDR's New Economic System in the 1960s.

As with every other economy, this was also the case for the SBZ and the GDR

Foreign trade was an important and, under the conditions of the first post-war years, a particularly complicated element of the national economic processes. Due to the reparations obligations, the processing of foreign trade was under the control of the SMAD until 1954.

In the first years after 1945, private companies in particular conducted hardly any significant trade with the western zones and other western states. The first competencies in this area were transferred to German bodies in 1947. The GDR's foreign trade began to be developed in 1949. In the

In September 1951, full responsibility for foreign trade was handed over to the foreign trade companies, which were divided into product areas. This began to organize the GDR's foreign trade according to the Soviet model and to enforce the foreign trade monopoly.

In 1954 the controls by the Soviet authorities were ended.

The initiatives of those responsible, including those of the General Secretary of the SED, were aimed at ensuring that the GDR fulfilled its international economic obligations and through a gradual improvement in foreign trade activities

increased the country's economic potential. At the beginning of the 1960s, Ulbricht pushed for targeted improvements in cooperation between foreign trade bodies and export companies. The development of the new economic system that began at that time also presented foreign trade with new tasks. At the 7th Party Congress in 1967, Ulbricht demanded that foreign trade should grow faster than industrial production. Until then, the GDR had adopted the economic system of the Soviet foreign trade organization, according to which the ministry was exclusively responsible

Companies responsible for foreign trade were entitled to conclude export and import contracts. The principle applied was that a type of goods could only be sold by one foreign trade company, which prevented two foreign trade companies from competing with each other. These foreign trade companies "bought" the goods from GDR export companies at domestic prices and sold them abroad at world market prices. The state made up the difference between these prices. In this way, the foreign trade companies shielded the export companies from the influences of the

world market, but it was not very economical to sell goods on the world market below production prices.

Walter Ulbricht also dealt intensively with this problem, sought critical opinions and arranged for the system to be corrected without giving up the state's foreign trade monopoly. Based on his considerations, a fundamental decision was made in the Politburo in December 1967 to reorganize the economic system in foreign trade.

At the same time, the export companies received an export plan,

which was coordinated with the plan of the foreign trade companies. Responsibility for export production and exports thus shifted to the companies.

The responsible foreign trade companies were directly subordinate to selected combines - for example in shipbuilding, the Petrochemical Combine Schwedt, Carl Zeiss Jena. In fact, as a result of these economic regulations, cooperation between production and foreign trade improved. However, the global marketability of the products did not improve.

Economically based

In the second half of the 1960s, decisions at all levels made it necessary to convert the GDR mark into foreign currencies in such a way that producers of export goods and consumers of imported goods could recognize the economic costs and benefits. Therefore, two fundamental decisions were made: In 1968, the ratio of the GDR mark to the transferable ruble<sup>2</sup>, and thus the profits of companies from export production, was redefined. For this purpose, all of the GDR's exports were converted into socialist ones

Countries determine the sum of the operating prices of export goods and compare them to the sum of export revenues (CMEA prices<sup>3</sup>).

However, this method could not be used to determine the ratio of the GDR mark to capitalist currencies. For a variety of reasons, one GDR mark remained equivalent to one West German mark. This relationship was important for a variety of practical questions in relation to the Federal Republic, for example for the calculation of alimony, inheritances, etc., but also the costs for the construction of the motorway

Highway tolls and others. This affected all financial transfers between the two German states, but also the comparison of prices and wages, etc.

In order to ensure that export companies are reimbursed for their economic expenses in foreign trade to non-socialist countries, price surcharges (= price compensation) were added to the prices in DM. The calculation was carried out in the same way as the calculation for the transferable ruble.

The rates for converting the GDR mark into dollars and other capitalist currencies took place at

on the basis of the actual exchange rates between the D-Mark and these currencies.

Since the exchange rate of the GDR mark for the transferable ruble and for a currency mark was determined according to different criteria, there could no longer be a uniform foreign trade plan after these decisions.

The dependence of the eastern part of Germany on trade with the western zones was much greater than the other way around. This arose for many reasons, including the fact that the raw material base for production in East Germany was in the West,

particularly with regard to metallurgical deliveries from the Ruhr area, that, in contrast, the West was able to fall back on the delivery options of the Western world if deliveries from the East had not previously been made.

The reconstruction in East Germany required much more intra-German trade than the West for its development.

So it came as no surprise that the West used so-called intra-German trade as a tool in the Cold War from the start.

At the beginning of 1947 the first trade agreement was signed between the East and

concluded with western Germany, the so-called Minden Agreement. The East mainly supplied grain, potatoes, sugar and textiles.

Two-thirds of Western supplies consisted of iron and steel. The volumes of these deliveries amounted to less than 20 percent of the flow of goods before the war. Hard coal was only delivered in very small quantities.

In mid-1948, intra-German trade stopped completely.

With the separate currency reform and the introduction of the DM in the western sectors of Berlin, the Western powers had the Soviet Union block the routes to and from West Berlin

to which the West responded with a propaganda-inflated airlift and with the interruption of intra-German trade. This was only resumed with the conclusion of the Jessup-Malik Agreement<sup>4</sup> in May 1949. One day after the GDR was founded, there was a temporary regulation of trade relations between the two German states - referred to there as "currency areas" - which was converted into a temporary agreement ("Berlin Agreement"<sup>5</sup>) in September 1951.

The content of the trade relations was through lists of goods

determined by which the western side determined what could be imported and what could be exported by the GDR. There were about these lists of goods in the

"Trustee Office for Interzone Trade" often leads to heated arguments between the representatives of both sides. West German medium-sized companies in particular found ways - usually bypassing their authorities - to do business with GDR foreign trade companies despite their products not being included in the goods lists.

The share of trade with the Federal Republic of the GDR's total foreign trade was rather small, less than ten percent. For the Federal Republic of Germany

This trade was primarily a political instrument to exert influence on the politics of the GDR.

In fact, the Federal Republic of Germany authorities often deliberately used the control instruments of intra-German trade to deliberately harm the GDR economy by refusing important, agreed deliveries of goods - such as rolled steel and pig iron.

For purely political reasons, the valid Berlin Agreement was signed by the Federal Republic of Germany on September 30, 1960 terminated "as a precaution". Again for political reasons, it was announced at the end of the year that trading would continue. That showed how little

intra-German trade was predictable for the GDR. In addition, in January 1961, the Federal Republic of Germany had unilaterally stipulated a revocation clause for this trade agreement. In doing so, Bonn created the legal prerequisites to be able to stop "important deliveries" to the GDR. In response, Ulbricht called for the GDR's economy to make it "interference-free". I owed this circumstance a trip to Moscow. Fritz Selbmann was tasked with negotiating with the Soviet side about what additional supplies could be obtained from the USSR. So that's it

Corresponding import contracts were concluded, some general directors of foreign trade companies were taken with them.

However, since Selbmann's efforts were not very successful, we general directors were able to devote ourselves to the beauties of the city at our leisure.

The results for eliminating interference in the GDR industry were more productive. Even if these were mostly expensive solutions, the dependency was reduced. On the other hand, our exports to capitalist countries increased from 1963/64.

At the insistence of the GDR, the obstacles in the 1960s were lifted

intra-German trade will be reduced by tough negotiations with the Federal Republic of Germany; Bonn dropped the cancellation clause. What was important was the agreement on a swing<sup>6</sup>, which accelerated the mutual exchange of goods. By 1972, the trading volume doubled (compared to 2.1 billion German marks in 1960). In 1972 it reached 5.3 billion.

The CMEA was founded in January 1949 as a reaction to the Western European integration process and the Marshall Plan. This was more of a political demonstration than a political concept. The

The founding document gave CMEA broad responsibility for planning, but the paper was never ratified. In fact, it was about an organization of bilateral cooperation between the participating states with the same economic order and the same political interests. Economic experiences should be exchanged by equal representatives, mutual technical assistance and the exchange of raw materials, food and machinery and equipment should be organized. As a result, some decisions on the foreign trade regime were agreed upon

For example, at the second meeting in August, trading in the following years would be based on the prices of 1949. This principle was maintained during and after the price increase resulting from the Korean War in 1950-1953.

In addition, the general delivery conditions for trade between CMEA companies were drawn up. However, no decisions were made about joint economic planning.

The GDR joined the CMEA in 1950. There were no council meetings between 1951 and 1953. In 1954 the Comecon countries were

Major investments were coordinated and cooperation was established in 1955 through the coordination of the five-year plans 1956-1960.

At the VIIth session of the Comecon Council in 1956, the fact was criticized that, on the one hand, the Comecon states were dependent on supplies from the capitalist countries, and on the other hand, half of the machines produced in the Comecon were technically outdated and in fact for the dumps were produced. Systematic work by the CMEA bodies then began, culminating in the drafting and approval of the CMEA Statute in December 1959.



This statute enshrines the previous practice. The organizational framework was defined, with the executive committee and the standing commissions for individual work areas. The decision-making authority of the CMEA was not changed: the CMEA bodies could only make recommendations; the decisions only became binding after the respective national approval. The national sovereignty of the Comecon countries was therefore not affected.

But the fact is: the insufficient effectiveness of the CMEA hindered the rapid economic growth of the region

GDR.

The USSR was the condition of the GDR's existence. It has secured the GDR's basic supply of raw materials since 1957/58. Walter Ulbricht therefore tried in many ways to strengthen economic cooperation between the two countries. An example of this was his call for the economies of the USSR and the GDR to grow together in February 1962. To this end, GDR experts should participate in Gosplan<sup>7</sup> and accelerate the process. It even became one

"Economic community" between the USSR and the GDR was called for.

It can be assumed that Walter Ulbricht's main concern was to obtain the raw materials necessary for the rapid development of production in the GDR and to use the great scientific potential of the USSR in order to raise the technical level of GDR production as quickly as possible to increase.

Since 1960, the GDR has been pursuing better coordination in the CMEA with the same objective.

Centralization of economic policy demanded by the Council. Further efforts were made to improve the supply of raw materials and to develop specialization

Research cooperation and standardization within the RGW. The GDR wanted to strengthen the responsibility of the CMEA in the development of economic cooperation and deepen the international division of labor in the socialist countries.

At the XIVth meeting of the CMEA in March 1961, Walter Ulbricht presented his thoughts and demands. He hoped that "by 1980 the socialist camp would overtake the main capitalist countries in terms of the level of labor productivity in all key sectors of the economy." That's why he criticized

the lack of accounting for the need for specialized products, the lack of coordination of export and import of such goods and the fact that no commercial contracts have been concluded for the specializations agreed in the CMEA. With regard to Romania, he noted that some CMEA countries only sought coexistence and not coexistence and therefore refused to effectively coordinate and pool forces. The position of the GDR was characterized by the awareness that an accelerated development of its industry would ensure a reliable division of labor with the

partners in CMEA demanded. This was not national egoism, but also an expression of the conviction that the community would only win through the strengthening of national economies.

The XVI. Council meeting decided

"Fundamental principles of the international socialist division of labor" defined the legal relationships in the CMEA, but kept the decision on important issues open. The biggest unresolved problem was addressed by Khrushchev in August and November 1962 when he proposed that all Comecon countries

to agree on a common plan and to create a central planning body for this. The GDR supported this proposal, but other CMEA countries, such as Romania, spoke out against it.

In May 1963, Ulbricht proposed in a draft letter that one should first begin with joint planning of "large investments and equipment" in the fields of petrochemicals, power plants, metallurgy, electrical engineering and electronics, and construction.

The Deputy Prime Minister Bruno Leuschner, who is responsible for CMEA issues, was informed that a

The report proposed by the Executive Committee of the CMEA watered down these proposals and informed the GDR government about them. In their practical work in the Comecon, the representatives of Romania and Bulgaria largely ignored the objectives set out in the documents and rejected practically all proposals to deepen economic cooperation. The main reason became public in April 1964. The Central Committee of the Romanian Workers' Party had let its allies know that it

»Interventions in national planning sovereignty as such in the

political sovereignty." Ulbricht then flew to Bucharest to convince the Romanian leadership that joint planning was also in their interest. Vain. This ended the discussion on the formation of a joint planning body.

Another theme of Comecon's activity in the period that followed concerned the demands of some Comecon countries to change agreements on common trade. This discussion was also held in preparation for the complex program. Many suggestions were made, some of which were difficult to understand: A

Part of the common trade should take place on the basis of free, i.e. convertible, foreign exchange, a "own price base" must be developed, and price increases should be carried out that were far removed from the prices on the capitalist world market. Even

partial convertibility of the transferable ruble was under discussion. Implementation of these proposals would have led to a market economy-oriented system of cooperation.

What these proposals had in common was that they contradicted the internal planning system of all Comecon countries or fundamental changes in the national ones

Planning systems would have been necessary. The stable trade relations would have been disrupted, not least: everything would have been associated with burdens on the GDR.

Ulbricht let Brezhnev know his opinion on the proposals in 1968:

"The prerequisite for a stronger control of the international division of labor across the sphere of circulation is closer cooperation in the economic field; currency convertibility of the transferable ruble must be preceded by commodity convertibility." Elsewhere he said: "But the question does not start with the question of trade

and foreign trade, but on the questions of labor productivity, the state of science and technology, cost prices, world standards and marketability, the level of economic management and accurate economic accounting.

The relationships between the Fenske and Ulbricht families are older. Walter Ulbricht knew Elsa Fenske, Kurt Fenske's mother, from their joint party work before 1933. After her liberation from the Jauer prison by the Red Army, Elsa Fenske joined those working in Dresden

"Group Ackermann" and three weeks after the end of the war became city councilor for social affairs in Dresden, later - as ministerial director - head of the

Social welfare in the state of Saxony. At the end of 1946, Elsa Fenske, like many other former resistance fighters, wanted to adopt an orphan. She also looked for a girl in various orphanages, but then shelved this wish because she would not have been able to devote the necessary time to the child due to the enormous workload. At that time, Walter Ulbricht had turned to Elsa Fenske with the same request, and she arranged it in May

Born in Leipzig in 1944, she was the daughter of a Soviet forced laborer named Maria Pestunowa, whom she originally wanted to adopt herself. There were no objections from the responsible Saxon social welfare office: Walter Ulbricht lived in a married couple with Lotte Kühn, and the family also included Lotte Kühn's mother and sister, who lived in the house. Only the Soviet authorities were

a little hesitantly: Although "Beate" had already lived with the Ulbricht family for some time, Moscow only approved the adoption in the summer of 1950. For the first time in March 1947, Lotte Ulbricht dutifully gave the Dresden youth welfare office a report on little Beate's development. She is an extremely lovable child, always friendly, spirited and energetic, imaginative and very intelligent.

According to Fenske's mother, the report made it clear how much Ulbricht's foster parents cared about their daughter.

The transferable ruble, adopted on October 22, 1963, was a "currency" for offsetting liabilities, for determining the international value of goods and as a unit in bilateral trade agreements between state planning authorities and governments belonging to the Comecon. The set rate was 1 transfer ruble = 4.67

Mark of the GDR.

The Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), founded in 1949, was a response to the integration of Western European states. In addition to the Soviet Union, founding members were Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and Czechoslovakia. On the 23rd

Albania joined the alliance in February 1949 (whose membership was later suspended), and the GDR followed on September 29, 1950 (until 1990). Mongolia (July 6, 1962), Cuba (1972) and Vietnam (1978) also later became members. On September 17, 1964, Yugoslavia joined some organs of Comecon.

China (until 1961) and North Korea had observer status. In November 1986, delegates from the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia, the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (South Yemen), Laos, Mozambique and Nicaragua attended a meeting as observers. On May 16th

In 1973 Finland signed a cooperation agreement with the CMEA, followed by Iraq and Mexico in 1975, Nicaragua in 1984, Mozambique in 1985. Angola, Ethiopia and the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen followed in 1986 and Afghanistan in 1987. With the end of the Soviet Union, the CMEA also dissolved on 28. June 1991.

With this four-power agreement of May 4, 1949, signed for the USA by Philip Jessup and by Jakow A. Malik, hence the Jessup-Malik Agreement, all restrictions against each other were lifted, which ended the "blockade". This included economic sanctions against the eastern zone.

The "Berlin Agreement" was signed on September 20, 1951 by negotiators from the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR; it regulated so-called interzone trade. This agreement was incorporated into the basic contract

of 1972, which stated: "Trade between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic will be developed on the basis of the existing agreements. The Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic will conclude long-term agreements with the aim of promoting the continuous development of economic relations.

Swing referred to an agreed overdraft in bilateral foreign trade. When goods were exchanged between each other, there was a sum that could result in arrears. If this amount was exceeded, either payments and foreign exchange were due or further deliveries were stopped. The credit line granted in the first year of 1962 was 200 million, of which far less than half was used in the first three years

became. In 1970, the GDR exceeded the credit line of almost 400 million accounting units that had now been granted. Gosplan was the committee for economic planning of the Soviet Union, comparable to the State Planning Commission in the GDR. It was by decree of the Council of People's Commissars of the RSFSR on Founded February 22, 1921.

Günter Herlt

Artists just love the cow that steps out of line

Günter Herlt, born in 1933, trained carpenter and bricklayer, graduated from the Workers' and Farmers' Faculty (ABF) in Weimar to study architecture. But he came to broadcasting and was to work as a journalist for radio and television in the GDR for four decades, including as deputy editor-in-chief of the Aktuelle Kamera and as

Correspondent for the DFF in the Federal Republic. In the 80s he was responsible for the television series "Everyday life in the West." He has been writing since the 90s. He began his journalistic work as a columnist for the weekly newspaper published by edition ost until 1996 "Berlin Left".

When Walter Ulbricht is mentioned, three encounters come to mind. The first was unwanted and unauthorized. I sat in the OB van as a radio reporter. The sound engineer tested the microphones for live broadcasting of a rally in the dead of winter. Wilhelm Pieck and

Walter Ulbricht just came into the stands. Walter grumbled: "It's pretty cold! It's a good thing my wife gave me the scarf!« Whereupon Wilhelm Pieck confessed that he was wearing particularly thick underpants. Two irrelevant comments that no one outside noticed. To my ears as a trained carpenter, it sounded familiar and pleasant that two former carpenters, in addition to their tough jobs, had the same thin skin as everyone else. I also thought: Where there are builders who know how much effort and money goes into building a house regardless of wind and weather, peace also has a good home.

The second meeting was very official. At the Leipzig Autumn Fair in 1969, the first remote data transmission was demonstrated in the GDR mechanical engineering hall.

For weeks, experts in Berlin and Moscow, Leipzig and Kiev had been working on this key project for further economic integration in the Association of Brother Countries: A technical drawing in Kiev is converted into coded data by the data center and sent as a control command to the machine tool in the exhibition hall.

At the time, this was considered a technical sensation. I had the process on the

Moderate screen. The entire party leadership including Walter Ulbricht arrived in the hall on time.

The director says: Attention, we're starting! I explain the process and call the field offices. Kyiv reports the departure of signals. The Karl-Marx-Stadt data center confirms the entrance, and a few seconds later the data recorder in the exhibition hall buzzes. The paper tape he spits out does not show any coded data, but rather plain text in capital letters: "We greet the First Secretary of the SED Central Committee, Comrade Walter Ulbricht, and wish our German friends much success in fulfilling this

Five-year plan!"

The machine starts in the background. I take the strip and immediately hand it to the addressee. Ulbricht is happy. The people in the hall clap. The thing is over!

The ministers involved patted themselves and me on the back. Later, two dozen "Banner of Work" medals were added. At the reception that followed, the senior engineer whispered: "It's great how you covered up the glitch in the remote data transmission!"

I asked, "What glitch?"

»Well, you saw that no technical data arrived from Kiev?

We puzzled all night but couldn't find a compatible computer language for this task. Then we thought of the greeting address as an emergency solution, and it came from Karl-Marx-Stadt and not from Kiev because the lines had collapsed in the meantime.

Günter Mittag still put himself on the podium. Potemkin would have saluted. To this day I don't know whether Walter Ulbricht had suspected something, or was just as deceived as everyone else.

The third meeting took place at the end of the 1960s in the State Council building. Ulbricht had called the television director Heinz Adameck and asked for one

Interview requested. Because Adameck thought it was about an interview in front of the camera, he took me with him. But Ulbricht didn't have an interview in mind, just a question. This became a

"Working lunch" for four: Walter and Lotte, Adameck and me. The two wanted to know why so many works of television drama, with their themes and conflicts, were so far removed from the country's top achievements and its pacesetters.

Adameck explained that the authors pondered a lot in silence, mostly lived apart, and had little insight. The general directors and heads of research at the combines are not very good either

talkative. And because it always took one or two years from the idea to the TV film, the creators needed a lot of foresight in order not to waste the millions in production costs for a film...

Lotte talked about what she would write if she could write.

Walter suggested organizing excursions with selected writers and directors to catch fire. He would let us unlock some doors and safes so that the artists could take a look into the future that had already begun. And then they should write about it and artistically

to report.

I took part in a field trip in the countryside. It was about the automated large-scale production of milk: two thousand cows, feeding in individual portions via computer, cleaning and milking at the push of a button, with only two people in the air-conditioned stable - one at the milking parlor and one in the control room.

After walking through the plague lock, showered and in sterile full-body coverings like in an operating room, we marched to the inspection. The cows were called out of their stalls by signal and formed up in stoic composure

in single file towards the milking facility. But a cow suddenly stopped, looked to the side, saw an open stable door, turned away and trotted out into the open.

The boss of the milk factory was horrified.

But the entire group of artists was delighted and donated

"Dissenter" Applause. She was the hero and provided the theme – as always in art.

What would Walter Ulbricht have said if he had witnessed that?

And what about Lotte!

Bernd Uhlmann

A modern person: a socialist entrepreneur

Bernd Uhlmann, born in 1939, son of a traditional Erzgebirge business family, member of the NDPD since 1962, studied at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig from 1969 to 1973, qualified as a journalist, head of department at the secretariat of the main committee of the NDPD and advisor to the chairman of the NDPD. Member of the Office of the Central Council of the

FDJ from 1967 to 1976, Vice President of the GDR-Finland Friendship Society and member of the Presidium of the GDR-Great Britain Friendship Society.

My father's name was Carl Uhlmann and he was an entrepreneur. In the Erzgebirge community of Gornsdorf there was mining from 1500 onwards, then after a hundred and fifty years came the linen weavers, then the braid weavers because the mountain no longer yielded anything, and another hundred years later the first stocking weavers settled in the village. The textile industry developed by leaps and bounds after the town came to power

railway network had been connected. Gornsdorf became a stocking weaving village. And I grew up in a family of hosiery makers. My great-grandfather, once a craftsman on the rolling mill, started with a machine and founded the company, the factory grew and developed, and in 1945/46 a significant part of the machines were dismantled as reparations. This meant there was room for resettlers, but some of the halls were empty.

Father became a general partner. That means the state got involved in the company and father converted production with the help of the investor and a partner

There were plenty of stockings, but electronics were on the rise. So he switched to producing electronic components. At the spring trade fair in Leipzig in March 1963, he presented the products of the Gornsdorf electrical equipment factory for the first time.

On March 7th, Ulbricht made his obligatory tour. And stopped at this stand. Ulbricht had everything shown and explained to him, and the factory manager, Werner Hofmann, who was there also reported on the company's history and the entrepreneur who had now changed production. Ulbricht heard

attentively and said: "You're a modern person, I like you." That's what it said the other day in New Germany and also Ulbricht's justification. »What you have done is of great importance. We will not be able to simply continue the production that has been taken over by capitalism in various sectors of production because the sales situation has changed. So we have to move on to new, modern productions. You can see that the previous attitude of entrepreneurs has changed here. They have now become modern people and are moving on to electronics."

Since I was studying in Leipzig at the same time, I met my father that evening while he was doing an assignment. When he said goodbye, Ulbricht said to him: "Greetings to everyone in Gornsdorf." And since I was one too, my father greeted me from Walter Ulbricht.

His determination that my father was a "modern person" prompted the central authority to send Lieselotte Thoms<sup>1</sup> to Gornsdorf. Your article ("Modern Man") appeared on

April 13, 1963 in the cultural supplement on the page entitled "The Educated Nation." The text has the idealistic pathos of those

years, but it makes the motives clear and makes it possible to experience the zeitgeist that motivated entrepreneurs like my father in the 50s and 60s to join the "new era". And that is why the exemplary article will be reproduced in large parts below:

»Actually, this is about two modern people: their names are Carl Uhlmann and Werner Hofmann, they are good friends and drank Brotherhood at the Leipzig trade fair.

Werner Hofmann would not have thought that possible just a few decades ago, because back then there was a deep gulf separating the two of them and they were enemies of each other, even without each other

"To know him personally," the author begins dramatically. »Both were born in the Erzgebirge. That was the only thing they had in common. Because Werner Hofmann was the child of a stocking weaver from Chemnitz who repeatedly had to fight bitterly against his entrepreneur for a few pennies in wages and ultimately always came up short. Carl Uhlmann, on the other hand, was born as the son of a Gornsdorf hosiery manufacturer.

The CA Uhlmann company dominated and determined life in Gornsdorf at that time. So much so that it was generally said that the Gornsdorf children will

raised in stockings. But they didn't wear these socks on their feet; they didn't even belong to them. What was meant were the large packs of stockings, pair by pair painstakingly made at home by the parents and large enough to sleep a child on. What the manufacturer paid was barely enough to live on, let alone for a child's bed." That seemed to the author to be too simple, too black and white, and so she put it into perspective: "Some will say that the Uhlmanns also started small. But when grandfather Carl bought the first machine, he said: It has to run 24 hours a day.

Carl had his twelve hours on it

worked, his wife had to get up and do her part. Hard on himself and others - that's how CA Uhlmann founded his company in 1878 and over time turned one machine and the work of others into many machines, and in the 1920s the first factory building became an entire closed company complex, which was then expanded to its full size emblazoned on the letterhead and in this way showed customers around the world the solid Saxon company.

The business passed from the grandfather to the father, and from him to Carl Uhlmann. So the Uhlmann family could actually say that they were up

"Grown up in stockings", except that there was never a lack of a cot in the Uhlmann villa, close to the factory. The villa stood on a small height, as if it were a symbol of the position of its residents. As middle-level manufacturers and merchants, they were closely linked to the places of production, as they were "on top" and the others were subordinate to them. They were the capitalists, those were the workers, they were the exploiters, those were the exploited. There was no bridge across this chasm.

When Carl Uhlmann traveled to England, earned his first spurs as a businessman and eagerly strived to follow exactly in the footsteps of his father and...

To replace his grandfather, the worker's son Werner Hofmann, who was eight years his junior, became a member of the social democratic youth organization 'Rote Falken' because he wanted to lead a better life and be freer than his father.

The new life began in 1945, and Werner Hofmann felt completely in his element. As soon as he returned from captivity, he became a member of the SED, trained as an electrical mechanic, studied, became a department manager in the Zwönitz measuring equipment factory and, in 1959, plant manager of the state-owned Gornsdorf electrical equipment factory, which now controls life and the

development of the place and its surroundings.

Carl Uhlmann also returned to Gornsdorf from the war. But it seemed to him as if everything was over now. The dismantling of the factory was painful, but there was still a lot left to start again. In the 'red factory', as the older building was called in contrast to the other gray factory buildings, the CA Uhlmann company began producing hosiery again. The remaining houses were rented to a state-owned textile company, which was later replaced by the electrical appliance factory. Yes, the workers ruled now, now

Their children slept in real beds, and gradually a prosperity came into their homes and into their lives that the stocking weavers of that time would never have dared to dream of. Who could blame them if they weren't exactly gentle with their former masters?

The Uhlmanns were not among the big capitalists; they were not expropriated and driven away like those who brought fascism and war to the world. That's why Carl Uhlmann wasn't exactly hostile to the young democratic state in which he lived, but he was still deeply suspicious. Than this state

When he took up socialism in 1952, he thought: Now they will soon cut us off.

One day it almost seemed as if he was right, but it was the workers' party itself that put a stop to certain exaggerations in socialist construction and declared that the workers' and farmers' power attaches importance to the production of private companies Help satisfy people's need for good goods.

This still seemed a contradiction to Carl Uhlmann, but he seized every opportunity to ensure the continued existence of his company. The state even helped him. For certain

He received state subsidies for special items that CA Uhlmann manufactured.

In the meantime, their son Bernd had grown up, went to high school and always brought home the best grades. In ancient times it would have been completely natural that he would have taken up the profession of his fathers.

But he had a completely different talent and different interests.

'I want to be a journalist,' he said to his father. He became a little sad, although he was happy about the boy's enthusiasm. Out of this dilemma he asked: 'And in our industry? Wouldn't that be nothing?'

'Oh, that's not my thing,' said Bernd lightly. 'What kind of perspective do I have?'

So Bernd applied to study at the journalism faculty in Leipzig. But first he had to have one

complete a 'practical year'. Which company should he go to? The cheapest option was the electrical appliance factory, as it was right on the doorstep. Bernd enjoyed working at the company, he got along well with his colleagues and also helped a lot with organizing a youth cultural group. It was precisely the time when Werner Hofmann became factory manager of the electrical equipment factory.

Carl Uhlmann, however, sometimes shook his head. Now the entrepreneur's son had become a worker himself in the factory in which his father, grandfather and great-grandfather had once ruled over the workers and which was now run by a worker's son, so that the workers could delegate him to study - it was a closed one. It's a tricky thing and it's better not to think about it any further. But his environment often forced Carl Uhlmann to think. The workers had built up their socialism and they were suddenly caught up in it. He

All he had to do was look out the window and he would see the best example of this every day: the electrical equipment factory.

Within just a few years, it grew from nothing to a business

1,300 employees and brought electrical engineering, a completely new industry, to this area. It stretched enormously and took over all the buildings and rooms of the former factory complex. And in the middle of the site, in the red factory and in the small administration building at the factory gate, sat the private entrepreneur Carl Uhlmann, producing stockings as ever and thinking - half admiringly and half angrily: I would love to have them

got me out of here too.

'They' could actually have made good use of the red factory, because the electrical equipment factory had now expanded its ever-growing production to four other towns where former textile factories had become vacant. A lot has also changed in the textile industry. Other textile manufacturers had taken on state participation and had done well. But with hosiery production it was a little more complicated. With the triumph of seamless stockings, production concentrated more and more on the large circular knitting machines

State-owned companies, which were more profitable there. Carl Uhlmann tried in vain to get government participation. If he were in the state's place, he wouldn't have had any particular interest in getting into this business. As a businessman, he understood that quite well. And if he thought further, then this state should actually have been satisfied if such a private entrepreneur, who was of little use to the economy, died very slowly and peacefully. They said that socialism has room for everyone - but in their industry that probably wouldn't last much longer.

With such considerations, it was tempting

The path that some hosiery manufacturers had taken before him, Carl Uhlmann sometimes had to follow. There was also the 200-year-old company 'Elbeo', Louis Bahner from Oberlungwitz, which had now established itself in Mannheim and Augsburg

›Stocking veteran‹ Werner Uhlmann – with

CA Uhlmann related only in name – now based in West Germany. And above all there was Margaritoff, the man who had risen from post-war stocking dealer to millionaire and head of the Opal stocking works in Schleswig-Holstein.

A few years ago Carl Uhlmann considered himself lucky to have him as his own

to count personal acquaintances. There was something magical about this Margaritoff. He was the man who had been 'choosing' the beauty queens in West Germany for years

'Miss Germany' was proclaimed, but in certain circles were only called 'Opal-Miss'. He set up an Alster villa in Hamburg for around two million marks - period furniture in the common rooms, a heated swimming pool in the basement - and when the Alster steamers passed by, the tour guides explained to the gawking tourists:

'And here, ladies and gentlemen, lives Germany's Perlon King

Margaritoff."

Carl Uhlmann sometimes read about him and the others in the West German textile trade magazine to which he subscribed.

I wouldn't open a very large company over there, more like a medium-sized, solid company, he thought as he read this. »But then you could start straight away with circular knitting machines. The switch from cotton knitting machines to circular knitting machines had also changed the situation in the industry in West Germany. The only difference was that in 1960, 35 small and medium-sized hosiery manufacturers had already been ruined

were, including the namesake Werner Uhlmann. The big ones ate the smaller ones, so it was back to the wolf law under which his father and grandfather had once trembled.

In remembering his ancestors, Carl Uhlmann used to end such reflections with the thought: I'm not leaving Gornsdorf, I grew up here.

Wasn't it more than the feeling of home that kept him here? Wasn't the whole advertising balloon that was inflated around stockings in West Germany a little scary to him? »CA Uhlmann never has

Advertised. "The advertising is in the product," father and grandfather used to say. So he also took it over from them. Here, in the state-owned companies, they said: 'My hand for my product.' That was a good principle that one could agree with. Here, in the German Democratic Republic, there was no jealousy or rivalry, and he had already gotten very used to this pleasant situation. And finally there was the boy, Bernd. He enjoyed studying, was one of the best in his seminar group, was a member of the FDJ and would be his father if he took such a step

certainly did not agree.

Carl Uhlmann ultimately said that life may be more pleasant over there in some places, but it is safer here. After all, almost half the world is already socialist, and the future seems to belong to them.

And he naturally did his part to make the German Democratic Republic more independent of the West. He produced an article on his knitting machines that had to be imported beforehand and in technical language

"Net leg dress" is called. These are the openwork structures of which one does not know exactly whether they are the beautiful ones

Legs of lightly clad dancers actually cover or reveal.

If Carl Uhlmann thought about it, his "tenant", the electrical equipment factory and its factory manager Werner Hofmann, had no less to think about. The need for components for communications technology grew and grew. The plan called for an increase again in 1963, and Werner Hofmann didn't know where the workforce would come from.

The growth of the new one gave him a headache, Carl Uhlmann's heart was heavy because of the death of the old one. But the way, this

It had already been proven that opposites would ultimately flow into a common stream. At the 3rd party conference, Walter Ulbricht had already said with regard to private entrepreneurs: 'Of course there are companies that produce unnecessary goods - so-called excess stocks. In these cases, it is necessary to objectively examine what production changes can be made. This cannot be done in a bureaucratic manner.'

Werner Hofmann no longer remembered these words exactly in the late summer of 1962, but he repeatedly looked out of the window at the one next door

red factory buildings. It would offer more than enough space for new production that was more necessary for the economy than what was being produced there now. Then an idea came to him.

Of course, he hadn't yet known of any case in which what he was now planning to do would have happened. But no matter: then we are the first! With this thought, he knocked on the door of the Uhlmann office and came out with his suggestion without much ado:

'We have to give up part of our production, it's about flat connectors, which we have to relocate. First, I would like to make the offer to you as the owner of the house

"Do you want to give up the stockings, take over this production and then work as a semi-state company?"

A good businessman controls his expression. Carl Uhlmann asked briefly and objectively about a few details, didn't say yes or no, but asked for three days to think about it.

'So see you Saturday. And remember, the new production is significantly higher in value than your current one.

Nevertheless, you would get by with your workforce.' With that, the plant manager left, leaving the entrepreneur in a violent confusion of emotions and reflections.

Just give up the stockings when the company has existed for almost 85 years? Breaking with old family traditions? That was hardly conceivable. But what if my production really no longer has any perspective? Electronics, on the other hand, would be a thing of the future.

But changing with my workforce, mostly older people? What would you say if it was time to say goodbye to the stockings? What would father and grandfather think about this? Maybe: you have to move with the times...

"You have to keep up with the times," smiled Carl Uhlmann when he told plant manager Werner on Saturday

Hofmann said yes.

'Congratulations,' he said, as if he were actually at a wedding, 'then we can get started straight away. "Be careful, we'll both be rocking the child."

From then on, the matter kept Carl Uhlmann constantly on tenterhooks. The changeover had to be regulated with the district council, which they did together. The electrical equipment factory helped clear out a hall, some machines were moved together in the next room, others became scrap, but there was not a minute of time for the pain of saying goodbye.

You could now also unsubscribe from the West German textile trade magazine. It had just been reported in one of the last issues that the Perlon King Margaritoff had gone bankrupt with a huge crash. After swallowing the small ones, the big sharks now ate each other. Carl Uhlmann stated it with a certain satisfaction - he had said yes to something better, back then and even more so today. The retraining of the workforce now began. Five workers from the company moved into the Meinersdorf branch of the company

Electrical equipment factory, which currently still produced the flat connectors, and were trained there. Word spread around the area in no time.

"I can't save myself from calls from business circles at the moment," sighed Carl Uhlmann in a conversation with the plant manager. >Everyone is interested, everyone asks: How is this supposed to work? What do you produce? What do you gain there? Hopefully they didn't pass the buck to you!"

'Definitely not him,' laughed Werner Hofmann. But the moment was just around the corner when Carl Uhlmann would

believed he was now holding the buck. At the beginning of December, Heiner Drechsele, the commercial director of the electrical equipment factory, came to him and said:

'Mr Uhlmann, we are now confirming the contracts for 1963. You must also sign your contracts.'

>Sign? I? Where there is nothing at all?' Carl Uhlmann stared at the papers in shock. Now they're tricking you, he thought.

First he asked the contract court - they warned him against signing. Then he called his notary. 'It's out of the question!' he said. Finally it happened

Negotiation. They sat in CA Uhlmann's office almost until midnight: Werner Hofmann and the employees from the district council, Carl Uhlmann and his legal advisors.

'Gentlemen, you have to understand: I've had five men in retraining for three days and nothing else, I still can't really imagine how it's all going to work, and I'm supposed to commit to a production that's four times as high of what my company has achieved so far this year?'

'But we support you in every way. "You can start production on January 1st," he said

the others meet him.

"First of all, the plant will provide you with the most important engineering cadres, a technologist and a quality controller," Werner Hofmann encouraged the hesitant.

'Then a very capable young master is coming to us now, and we'll leave him to you straight away.'

Nothing helped. Carl Uhlmann played his biggest trump card: 'And who will pay the contractual penalty that I will be charged if I don't fulfill the plan?'

Lieselotte Thoms' description went back and forth dramatically, and at the end it was signed.

»Then came the day of meeting Walter Ulbricht. Werner Hofmann explained to the Chairman of the State Council what has changed since his visit to Gornsdorf two years ago. Of course, Carl Uhlmann was part of it. Two years ago, he thought, I wasn't allowed to be there. I stood behind the window and saw Walter Ulbricht walk past it.

He almost missed the performance because of these memories. He was just in time to hear Walter Ulbricht ask: 'Where is he?'

'He's standing next to you!' said Werner

Hofmann.

'You're a modern person, I like you! "What you have done is of great importance," said Walter Ulbricht.

As I said at the beginning, this word has caused all sorts of furor. But Carl Uhlmann was actually most impressed by something else.

During the conversation, Walter Ulbricht asked him: 'You produce in the red building?'

He nodded, completely dumbfounded: 'You remember that?'

He later said to his son Bernd, with whom he was in Leipzig:

'I would never have thought it possible for a man to have so much on his mind

must still remember our red factory after two years."

Lieselotte Thoms (1920-1992), journalist, chief reporter for Neue Deutschland and from 1968 to 1981 editor-in-chief of the Women's magazine for you. From 1963 to 1990 he was a member of the People's Chamber for the DFD. 1968 Member of the Women's Commission at the Politburo of the SED Central Committee.

Horst Sölle

Baggage worker at the train station, then foreign trade minister



Horst Sölle, born in 1924, joined the SPD after returning from Soviet captivity, attended the ABF in Leipzig in 1946/47, then studied economics at Leipzig University. Subsequently, instructor in the Ministry of Transport, finally head of the trade department,

Supply and foreign trade of the SED Central Committee. From 1963 to 1965 State Secretary in the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Internal German Trade, then Minister until 1986. From 1986 to 1989 as deputy prime minister, responsible for cooperation between the GDR and the RGW. Candidate from 1963 to 1976, then member of the SED Central Committee until 1989. Horst Sölle has been in a retirement home in Zeuthen since 2000.

Horst, from baggage worker to minister - an interesting but not unique GDR

Biography. Let's start with the question of how it came about that you became an instructor in the Ministry of Transport straight after your studies in 1950?

My father worked for the Deutsche Reichsbahn, so I wanted to go to the railway too. He was in the SPD. One reason why I also joined this party in August 1945 after my early release from captivity (I was completely exhausted and ill). I didn't have an inner relationship with her. That's why I actively supported the association with the KPD. In 1946 I became a member of the SED. After I applied to

I first became a baggage worker at the Leipzig train station, meaning I transported suitcases, bags and other travel goods with a lizard. The fact that I was appointed to the ministry immediately after my studies was because the young republic needed cadres everywhere. The Ministry of Transport, which was created after the founding of the GDR, was pleased that an "expert" came with me. But after about a year and a half, I was delegated to the Ministry of Foreign Trade.

Your birthplace is also that of Walter Ulbricht. When did you first meet him?

In the 1940s, when I was still working and studying in Leipzig, I saw him a few times at public events. He impressed me with the concreteness of his speeches. Later, when I worked in the Central Committee and was also a member there, I not only saw him more often, but also spoke to him. In the mid-1950s, when Heiner Rau became Minister for Foreign Trade and Inner German Trade - which he remained until his death in the spring of 1961 - Ulbricht sent me there. I learned a lot from Heinrich Rau, an experienced trade unionist and communist who fought on the side of the Republic in the Spanish Civil War, especially

People leadership.

Since I worked at the Ministry of Foreign Trade, I always met Ulbricht during the tours of the spring and autumn fairs in Leipzig.

You have been a candidate for the Central Committee since 1963. Do you have any memories from back then?

I have on the VI. Spoken for discussion at the 1963 party conference. Walter Ulbricht interrupted me with the remark: "This is our new foreign trade minister." But at that time I was only state secretary. Julius Balkow had been the minister since 1961. The interesting thing is that he had also served as deputy minister five years earlier

began. Ulbricht probably wanted to point out my possible perspective with his interjection. At least that's how the ministry employees understood it at the time. But to be honest: For Walter Ulbricht, when it came to foreign trade issues, it was not so much the minister and his deputy or state secretary who were the contacts, but rather Ernst Lange. He had headed the Trade and Supply Department in the Central Committee (later Trade, Supply and Foreign Trade) for years. He had more experience.

Foreign trade was also important in the 1960s, but not the most important field. It was all about that

Freeing up our economy from disruption, i.e. reducing our dependence on supplies from the West. In the past, the GDR's economy had repeatedly come under pressure from the Federal Republic of Germany: at the end of 1960, Bonn terminated the trade agreement with the GDR at short notice. Such politically intentional attacks on the economic development of our republic had to be minimized.

We foreign traders had to ensure that we got goods and raw materials from more reliable partners.

How did you perceive Ulbricht as head of state and party?

He was a sovereign in a positive sense. The dilemma began when he became old and sick. If he had a strong opinion on something, one could assume that he had read it beforehand and consulted with experts. He was very critical. He didn't like whitewashing.

Have you accompanied Ulbricht on trips abroad? Here I have a photo from the state visit to Egypt in which you can be seen.

No, no, I wasn't there on any of Ulbricht's trips abroad. That picture from Egypt shows the back of a man's head, which a newspaper incorrectly used in the caption

referred to as mine. But it was Herbert Weiß, who was Deputy Foreign Trade Minister like me at the time.

I'm interested in Walter Ulbricht's trade fair tours. Were they just photo ops at the stands?

No, he had substantive discussions. The tours were not protocol events, but rather exchanges of experiences on how both indoor and outdoor care must be managed. At the stands of German companies he asked the question most often - I can still hear it today:

»What are you for?

Concepts?" By that he of course meant their German policy considerations. And we continued this with our visits to the Hanover Fair. As is well known, the Hanover Trade Fair was founded in 1947 as a response to the Leipzig Trade Fair in the Soviet occupation zone and was then consciously developed as a competitor to the GDR trade fair. For this purpose, quite a few trade fair people from Leipzig were recruited.

Can you remember how Ulbricht felt about Willy Brandt?

Positive and open-minded. He saw him as a social democrat who had resisted Hitler.

He saw the fact that he became head of government in Bonn as something new in the development of the Federal Republic. Ulbricht considered him to be an important factor in the normalization of relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany, which he sought, when the question of establishing German unity or a confederation no longer stood. I'll come back to my starting point: You rose from train station worker to university graduate to deputy prime minister of the GDR within just a few years. How was that possible?

Of course, this was causally linked to the conditions in the GDR, that - it was not just a phrase - people trusted the youth and gave them major tasks. Encouraging and demanding was practice. For me in particular, as a 39-year-old Central Committee instructor, I was sent to the ministry in 1963 to help implement the New Economic System of Planning and Management in the GDR's foreign trade as State Secretary. But at some point we reached a point with the NÖS where things couldn't continue like this. The companies soon claimed all the proceeds for themselves and the decision on how they were used, so that ultimately for

there was nothing left in the state budget. That could have been sorted out, but it was turned into a fiasco and blamed on Ulbricht, who was in the last phase of his life. I thought that was unfair.

As Minister for Foreign Trade of the GDR, you were also subject to these restrictive NATO measures: anyone who wanted to go to the West on business had to apply for this at the Travel Board Office in Berlin. Until 1970.

Yes. But I was probably the first GDR citizen who consciously stopped going along with it. I simply drove to the Hanover Trade Fair without obtaining permission from the Western Allies

caught up. During this time, people sometimes had to take completely unconventional paths to represent the interests of the GDR. But you're right: we were bullied wherever they could. The GDR should be damaged everywhere.

You also know the Council for Mutual Economic Aid from the inside. What was good about CMEA and what was bad?

The existence of capitalism was bad. It harmed not only us, but all socialist countries.

The CMEA was an important institution for coordinating the economies of the socialist countries and also fending off attacks from the West.

The right attempt to develop an economic community based on common political interests also failed because of the national interests of individual member states. The West was able to use its money to promote selfishness by developing bilateral relationships with individual states and thereby promising their own advantages. People preferred hard, convertible currency with which they could buy anything on the world market - without understanding that this meant they were becoming dependent, from which they could hardly escape. Within the CMEA the only things that worked were – and

In the Gorbachev era, even that with restrictions - the economic relations between the GDR and the USSR. In any case, we always took the commitments we made very seriously. In addition, without the raw materials from the USSR, the GDR economy would not have been viable. My partner in the Soviet Union was Foreign Trade Minister Nikolai S. Patolichev. A great person. We had an excellent relationship. He once said: Our allies can experiment in economics as they please. If things go wrong, we are still here to help. But with us nothing is allowed

happen.

Walter Ulbricht was an expert at coordinating national and international interests.

Herbert Weiz

Without progress in science and technology there can be no social progress

Herbert Weiz, born in 1924, joined the KPD on January 1, 1945 after returning from American captivity. From 1946 to 1949 he studied at the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena, received his doctorate, and worked in the Ministry of Economics

and work of the state of Thuringia. Then, from 1951 to 1953, department and plant manager at VEB

"Optima" office machine plant in Erfurt, until 1955 head of the light engineering headquarters in the Ministry of Mechanical Engineering, until 1962 1.

Deputy plant manager at VEB Carl Zeiss Jena and member of the GDR Research Council, then State Secretary for Research and Technology until 1967.

Distance learning at the Technical University of Dresden and graduating as an engineer-economist in 1955. Member of the Central Committee of the SED from 1958 to 1989. Member of Parliament since 1963

People's Chamber, from 1967 deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and from 1974 to 1989 Minister for Science and Technology.

You are a graduate of the Workers and Farmers Faculty in Jena. Walter Ulbricht helped found these preparatory colleges, as they were called from 1946 to 1949. What role did they play from your perspective?

A very important one in breaking the so-called educational privilege. The ABF enabled young people who came from circles where access to colleges and universities had previously been impossible

appropriate qualification seemed unthinkable for financial reasons. The workers' and farmers' faculties existed until 1963, and I was one of around 30,000 graduates. I graduated from high school after two years there, that was in 1948, and then started studying economics.

The development of the "new intelligence" in the GDR took place largely through the ABF. And I realized that Ulbricht had had a significant influence on this when I met him. Educational issues were always very important to him.

That back then, while studying in Jena, class struggle was still going on

University prevailed, I found out for myself. The students with middle-class backgrounds called us derogatory names "Pitchfork students" and were addressed as "you" and "Mr. fellow student." I once had to do a seminar paper with one of them and he summoned me to his place. The police were waiting for me there. He had recently been arrested because he worked in a group that was very active in campaigning against the new order. I was thought to be a member of this group and, even though I was a member of the party, I was put in a cell.

At some point they fired me and apologized to me.

When did you first interact with Ulbricht?

At the beginning of the 1950s, I was one of 21 factory managers of state-owned companies who had committed themselves to the GDR President to make their company profitable within a year, i.e. to take it from the red to the black.

I mean personally.

That was later, at a plenum, when I was still at Zeiss, in the second half of the 1950s. In his speech, Ulbricht explained that Zeiss was producing the new ZAR-1 computer. But that wasn't the case. The computer was still in development. I left during the break

to him: "Comrade Ulbricht, what you said is not true, it shouldn't be in the newspaper."

During the next break he called me in to talk. He wanted to know why I asked him about it earlier. – Because I am for the truth and don't want the party to embarrass itself, I replied. I did very well, he said. »We must always be open and honest. And that's how we should treat each other in the future. Even if the truth is unpleasant or even painful." That was the beginning of a close relationship. When I was in Berlin, he called me regularly to check up on me

to inquire about this or that. The first time this happened, my secretary reported that Ulbricht from the ministry - we had an employee of that name - wanted to speak to me, whereupon she told him that I didn't have time for him now. The error quickly clears up.

In short, she couldn't imagine that Walter Ulbricht would just call me like that.

"Say, I read here..." or

"I got such and such information..." he usually began. "What do you think?" I liked that, it showed me how intensively he was involved in scientific and technical matters

questions and how interested he was in these topics.

Or I remember preparing for a party conference. It was summer, he took off his jacket and stood in front of our working group and explained what he needed from us for his report. His conceptual thinking convinced me that in science you have to think far ahead, and he was able to do that. He impressed me very much in this respect.

As under Ulbricht, scientific principles and applied research were never promoted again. He had understood: without scientific and technical progress

there is no social progress.

In the crisis year of 1953, you were not yet 30 years old and were the VEB plant manager

»Optima« office machine plant in Erfurt. Was this a big operation?

Around 4,000 working people.

How did you experience June 17th there?

To be honest, I was completely surprised because I thought everything was fine with our workforce. I was in a meeting and was informed that the workers and employees had gathered at the depot and were on strike.

At first I assumed that she was with

did not agree with my management work. I went into the yard where construction was taking place, climbed onto a pile of rubble and shouted:

"What do you want from me, what have I done wrong?"

"We don't want anything from you," they shouted. We don't agree with the politics in Berlin, the government should resign!" There were also individual calls of "Ulbricht has to go!"

I take note of that, I said, but now they should get back to work. Nobody leaves the company - unless it's over my dead body! Then I stood in front of the factory gate.

At that moment, Soviet tanks drove up. An officer shouted in German what was going on. (I later found out that the employees of the Funkwerk and VEB Schwermaschinenbau were already marching on the street.) The Russian asked me to come with him, supposedly to discuss the situation with me. I tried to make it clear to him that, firstly, I had the matter under control and secondly, that this could be misunderstood if they took me away. However, the officer was not irritated and took me to the headquarters. There I was asked how I assessed the situation. People are sensible

I tried to make them understand that you just had to talk to them properly. That's why they'd better let me go.

In the meantime, however, the workers in my company were no longer demanding that Ulbricht and the government go away, but that the Russians should release their supposedly arrested plant manager Weiz. Then the Soviets also realized that they had made a mistake and brought me back. At the factory yard I was greeted like a hero with applause. I thanked him and repeated my request: Get to work! If we want to live better, it can only be done with proper work. The

They understood and resumed work.

How do you explain the massive rejection of Ulbricht back then?

I believe that this was primarily the result of massive incitement from the West. Ulbricht was a very clever, far-thinking politician; I personally valued him very much. But it had one serious shortcoming: the language. And the enemy exploited and exploited this mercilessly. He did it as always: direct all the fire at the most important person, because in doing so he hopes to hit the entire movement severely. Let's think of Liebknecht/Luxemburg, Lenin, Thälmann

... The opponent was perhaps smarter than most of us in this respect: he understood very early on that Ulbricht was the outstanding political figure in the GDR. And that's why he had to leave. Even within the party, the constant agitation did not remain without effect. Many comrades who didn't even know Ulbricht parroted this nonsense about the power-hungry, incorrigible dogmatist, the authoritarian ruler and dictator at the mercy of Moscow.

Ulbricht maintained a very good relationship with scientists who belonged to the elite of German natural scientists, such as the physicist Max Volmer<sup>1</sup>

Pioneer of quantum mechanics, Nobel Prize winners Gustav Hertz<sup>2</sup>, Peter Adolf Thiessen<sup>3</sup> and others. What were these relationships based on?

He not only had a positive relationship with the people mentioned and others, but with science as a whole. My first task in Berlin was to prepare a meeting of the Research Council on the tasks of science and technology in the fall of 1962, at which Ulbricht wanted to speak. All Research Council members – just over 100 people – were invited, we met in the Council of Ministers in a large hall, and I chaired the conference. The speech left one

Great impression on everyone, the scientists were visibly impressed by Ulbricht, some were downright enthusiastic. As I subsequently found, it was a very wise decision on Ulbricht's part to appear before this committee. He often broke away from the speech and made comments like this, saying that he was like Queen Juliane of the Netherlands: If she wanted to know what the people thought and moved, she didn't ask her advisors, but the people concerned themselves. That's why he consulted If he wanted to know what the situation is with science and technology and their progress in the country and in the world, just "You, ladies

and gentlemen," and not his advisors. This wasn't a game changer, but rather corresponded to his inner need. And people felt that. He also said without hesitation when he didn't understand something and asked questions. He was very relaxed and open.

Ulbricht often summoned me to him, bypassing official channels, for which Günter Mittag criticized me because I had not informed him about it. I objected to why I had to ask him whether I could go to Ulbricht or not. That's not the point, he said offended, he just had to be informed about it.

What was Ulbricht's basic tenor?

Speech?

That science and technology are of crucial importance for the social development of the GDR.

You accompanied Ulbricht on his visit to the White Hirsch. Manfred von Ardenne<sup>4</sup> had been running his private research institute there since 1955, which he had set up with the 100,000 rubles he received with the Stalin Prize in 1953.

Yes, that was an interesting journey. We were quartered in the villa of Friedrich Paulus<sup>5</sup>, who died in 1957, in Oberloschwitz near Dresden.

Ulbricht wanted to clarify two things. Firstly, Ardenne had sent him something that I didn't know about and he wanted to talk to him about it. And secondly, he had summoned Klaus Fuchs<sup>6</sup>. He wanted to set up a nuclear fuel cycle in the GDR and then move on to

fast breeder reactors. The bad thing was that he had already initiated the first measures in Dresden. That was an impossible thing for the GDR.

Ulbricht was well prepared for the conversation with Fuchs; he was completely in the know; after all, Klaus Fuchs' wife worked for him as a secretary. I have rarely seen him so rigorous.

That's out of the question at all, he said, despite understanding that we have to expand the GDR's energy base: that's beyond our capabilities. But we can't do that for political reasons either. "That's not how it works, dear comrade, I'm not ruining the GDR," said Ulbricht. "That's out of the question at all." But, he relented, he would be going back to Moscow soon. Fuchs should give him a concept of how we could develop cooperation with the Soviet Union in the field of nuclear energy. Fuchs did that, and he then sat with me on the special train that carried the delegation

brought to Moscow. He presented me with the concept that Ulbricht had asked of him, and I saw that he wanted to reintroduce this fuel cycle in the GDR - through the back door, so to speak. My hair stood on end. How did I get the problem solved? Klaus Fuchs, who I was friends with and whom I greatly respected because of his past, was a headstrong stubborn man who would not shy away from presenting his paper to the Soviets even without Ulbricht's blessing. Come on, Klaus, I said, that's a good concept, we should drink to that. Now you have to know that we

Both couldn't tolerate alcohol. So

We "forgot" what was required for him to sign the paper. In the writing office in Moscow I had his concept copied again without the passages I had deleted and then gave them to Walter Ulbricht. He noticed the missing signature. I excused myself and said that we, Klaus and I, had written the concept together. Which was somehow true. And Ulbricht gave the paper to Khrushchev. But you wanted to tell me something about Ulbricht's visit to Ardenne. I have to correct something.

Contrary to current accounts that claim that Ulbricht held the Baron in high esteem, this was by no means the case. He had a very friendly and critical relationship with him.

In the collection of material about his replacement there is a quote according to which Ulbricht is said to have said that if he really wanted to know what was going on in the country, he would not ask the party apparatus, but rather Manfred von Ardenne. If it is guaranteed, he probably wanted to annoy the party apparatus, but there was nothing more to it. – I have all the conversations

between the two took part on the White Hirsch. Ardenne wanted government participation in his institute. He was already well protected materially and financially, I would argue that if other institutes had received as much as the good Baron, they might even have been better. Because, let's not kid ourselves, there was an exaggerated fuss about Ardenne's institute; Ardenne was a good PR man in his own right. Quite a few of the research council members rejected Ardenne. Steenbeck<sup>7</sup> said: Yes, he is a good technician and also has ideas, but he is not a scientist.

(Because of these objections, Ardenne was also not elected as a member of the Academy.)

Walter Ulbricht rejected state involvement; he immediately saw the horse's foot. He knew that Ardenne never worked according to economic accounting principles. The institute would have become a bottomless pit. Ardenne should discuss all such questions with me, said Ulbricht, but his institute would remain private. After this meeting, Walter Ulbricht said to me: Slowly reduce the donations. And why doesn't the baron have to pay taxes? Comparable facilities

are also not exempt from these obligations. So in short, he increasingly disliked the fact that Manfred von Ardenne was being courted in the way that it was happening.

Later, after the fall of the Wall, it was rumored from those around him that I had continued to pressure him - on behalf of Honecker - to allow state participation in the institute, which he bravely refused. The opposite was the case. In addition: Honecker was neither interested in Ardenne's institute nor in scientific research.

We have made many contortions based on alliance policy considerations,

but not like that. One day, for example, Prof. Dr. Hermann Klare<sup>8</sup>, the President of the Academy of Sciences, came to me and explained that he wanted to become a member of the SED.

Hermann, that's not possible, I said, the academy president has to be neutral and non-partisan. He could only be consoled by saying that in my eyes he was much more important in this position as a non-party communist than as a party member.

Or Kurt Schwabe<sup>9</sup>, who was born in 1945

"Research Institute for Chemical Technology" was founded. The Nazis had scared him away from the TU, so he began doing independent research. The

was an excellent facility that still exists today. I told Ardenne that he should take a lesson from this: Schwabe makes several million in profit every year and passes it on to the state, which doesn't just take it. Prof. Schwabe granted himself a modest salary of less 6,000 marks gross. And, since he had no children and he liked me, he wanted to leave his institute to me in his will. I considered that a great honor, but as Deputy Prime Minister I could not and did not want to accept such an inheritance.

What was the relationship like between Max Steenbeck, an excellent one

Physicist, and Walter Ulbricht?

Positive. It is also not true that after his return from the Soviet Union he asked Ulbricht time to think about whether he would stay in the GDR or go to the Federal Republic of Germany. When he later received the Krupp Prize for his work at Siemens during the Nazi era, that was hanging

40,000 DM, he came to me and asked if he should accept the money, from which I concluded that he wanted to refuse the price. Of course, I said, why not? Good, he said, and donated most of it to a kindergarten in Jena, then to the purchase of scientific literature

abroad. And with the rest he paid for a vacation with his wife to Finland. Steenbeck never wanted to go to Germany.

By the way: I was responsible for science and technology in the Council of Ministers for a total of 27 years: none of the researchers who were with me before and asked for business or vacation trips to the West stayed over there. Not one. They knew what they had in the GDR.

And Ulbricht was friends with Peter Adolf Thiessen.

They were on a first name basis. Thiessen had a terrible past: He was in the NSDAP before 1933. But he had

also a great achievement. The communist Robert Rompe<sup>11</sup>, who led an illegal anti-fascist resistance group, also worked at the renowned Kaiser Wilhelm Institute<sup>10</sup>, which Thiessen headed. Thiessen noticed this – and covered for him.

Rompe once told me that he actually owed his life to Thiessen, who could have blown him up. Instead, he warned him: Be careful!

He didn't say: Stop it!

Ulbricht knew about it. And about what Thiessen had done for the Soviet atomic bomb to break the US nuclear weapons monopoly.

Thiessen was the most decorated German researcher in the Soviet Union; the Soviets – rightly – showered him with awards. He returned to the GDR as a rich man.

Thiessen, you mentioned, was in the NSDAP. As soon as you were appointed as a minister, you became known in the West as "Nazi" denounced. What was there? First: The GDR and the

Anti-fascists in the Federal Republic have repeatedly sharply criticized the fact that incriminated Nazis were restored to office and dignity in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s. In the "fight against communism" in the Cold War, they continued where they had started in 1945

must stop: judges, military officers, secret service agents, politicians... To exonerate themselves, Bonn launched attacks on the GDR by claiming that there were also Nazis in leading positions in the GDR. In this way, the anti-fascist character of the GDR was to be questioned. That's what people still do today: look on the Internet at Wikipedia - in the biographical entries on GDR officials, reference is made right at the beginning to supposed membership in the NSDAP. And immediately afterwards it's time to join the KPD or SED. This suggests continuity and serves

the verdict "brown equals red".

When my biography was hyped up in the Western press, the comrades from the Central Committee - of which I was already a member - summoned me in alarm and asked me what was going on with the NSDAP. I said I didn't know anything about it, I was never a member of the Nazi party. I was in the Hitler Youth like most people. I lived in a village in Thuringia with 800 inhabitants at the time. If you hadn't gone to the Pimpfen, you would have been ostracized. The investigations revealed: Our teacher, NSDAP local group leader and die-hard Nazi, who taught us in uniform,

wanted to shine and had all his former students from the village registered as members of the NSDAP when they turned 18 without their knowledge. I had no idea about it, especially since I was drafted into military service a short time later. My father was a communist and he would have kicked me out of the house if this had been a conscious and deliberate decision on my part.

But Wikipedia says untruthfully: "In 1942 he became a member of the NSDAP."

I didn't become a member, I was made a member, which I only found out about more than twenty years later.

That was a significant difference.

Back to Thiessen and Ulbricht. As you said, they had a friendly relationship and advised each other. The slogan of overtaking without catching up should also go back to Thiessen?

No, Thiessen was not the author. State Secretary Stubenrauch from me, he got his degree in engineering in Leningrad, and his professor Schaumjan are the actual fathers. I knew Schaumyan personally. Our ministry was in Wuhlheide, and Ulbricht also had the Academy for Marxist-

Leninist organization sciences were founded and located. He wanted to advance science and research, which must be organized. I thought founding an academy was excessive; an institute would have done the same, but I agreed with Ulbricht's request in principle.

So I invited Schaumyan to give lectures at the academy. He had made a significant contribution to increasing productivity in machine tool construction.

He talked about that and about fundamentals in research.

Wolfgang Berger, Ulbricht's colleague, once attended Schaumjan's lecture. One thesis of the Leningrad scientist was that we don't We should "reinvent" what capitalism is developing, but rather we should work around it, i.e. not just catch up with what it is doing in science and technology. Berger deduced from this: overtaking without catching up.

And he wrote that to Ulbricht in a speech.

So it was intended as a science and technology strategy and not for society?

Naturally. If one is just running behind in research, the other one is always there

already further. So, in order to achieve top performance, you have to take other paths and leave the paths set by others. – I was also chairman of the committee that awarded the National Prizes for Science and Technology. This was a very lucrative award and we often received inventions submitted that should be honored in this way. We had to pay attention to what was actually new or just re-invented.

The slogan remains valid even if it is not spoken.

Everywhere in the world where research is carried out, this principle is followed: If

If you want to end up at the front, you have to try to overtake the competition on your own path and not catch up.

So anyone who tried to ridicule this slogan then and now has understood nothing. The majority of our scientists and technicians have understood it, but the ideologues have not.

I remember a pedagogical congress at which a union official declared that we now had to overtake West Germany without catching up.

Complete nonsense. Ulbricht didn't want that at all, we discussed it

replaced repeatedly. However, he was against copying and aping in any field.

Why have we failed to combine the advantages of socialism with scientific and technological progress?

Oh, Egon, because we made big political mistakes. And because our economic base was simply too narrow to get to the top. Every successful company today knows what is happening in its field around the world.

We failed because of that. The embargo in the Cold War, the keeping of the GDR away from the international division of labor and that

Sharing information further harmed us. Even though the Enlightenment comrades from the science and technology sector helped us a lot, they couldn't do everything. We lacked information, there was an unmet need for international specialist literature, which is what a scientist makes his living from. At its core, science is a kind of theft; you take over information to find out what others are doing and what you shouldn't be doing - so you can overtake them without catching up.

Participation in international congresses was also important. But there

In turn, our defense did not let many scientists go because they were secretive and were considered at risk. This overcaution damaged the GDR, but even more so the Soviet Union. Our friends were absolute world leaders in military research, but everything remained secret. Whoever was the first to put a Sputnik into orbit had sufficiently proven what potential it had.

At that time, around 200,000 scientists in Zelenograd near Moscow worked almost exclusively on defense tasks. What they did there was fantastic. I was there twice and was allowed to

Don't bring anyone with you, not even an interpreter. I asked them why their great developments and discoveries are not transferred to the civilian economy so that society as a whole can benefit from them. All they said was: We don't have the resources for that - and for security reasons. I was once sent to the Soviet Union to negotiate. Our Politburo had decided on a program of 78 topics on which we wanted to research and work together with Soviet scientists and technicians. Three topics stood out that had an impact

very much their security interests, it was said. I bit like I was on granite. I informed Erich Honecker, expecting him to make this a matter for the boss, but he referred me to Günter Mittag; he obviously didn't understand the significance. That disappointed me. The mass of scientific topics that we had to work on alone could not be managed by the small GDR. Our friends really let us down. They didn't allow themselves to be influenced, but they benefited from us.

Last question, which brings me back to the starting point: Walter Ulbricht attached great importance to this

Development of science and technology, he maintained a constructive relationship with scientists. Would you disagree with me if I said that education was at least as important to him?

Not at all. He had internalized: If there is no proper education system, then science and technology will also fall behind.

Max Volmer (1885-1965), chemist with a focus on physical chemistry (reaction kinetics), who came to Agudzera near Sukhumi in August 1945 with a group of specialists led by Gustav Hertz. There he worked on setting up a facility to produce heavy water as part of the Soviet atomic bomb project

with. Together with Gustav Richter, he succeeded in building an appropriate ammonia distillation tower in Norilsk. In 1955 he returned to the GDR, took up a professorship at the Humboldt University in Berlin and became a member of the Scientific Council for the Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy at the GDR Council of Ministers. From 1955 to 1958 he was president and vice-president of the German Academy of Sciences until 1963, and in 1957 he was a founding member of the GDR Research Council. Gustav Hertz (1887-1975), Nobel Prize in Physics in 1925, the Nazis withdrew his teaching position because of his Jewish descent. In August 1945 with Max Steenbeck and other atomic scientists to Sukhumi. 1951 Stalin Prize. 1954 return to the GDR, 1955 head of the Scientific Council for the Peaceful Application of Atomic Energy at the Council of Ministers of the GDR. Director of the

physics institute at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, member of the Academy of Sciences of the GDR and in 1957 a founding member of the Research Council of the GDR as well as a national prize winner. He was the only Nobel Prize winner from the GDR, or more correctly: the only scientist who worked in the GDR after the prize was awarded.

Peter Adolf Thiessen (1899-1990),

Chemist, from 1935 to 1945 director of the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for physical chemistry and electrochemistry in Berlin-Dahlem.

Together with Gustav Hertz, Max Volmer and Manfred von Ardenne, he worked on the Soviet atomic bomb project since 1945.

Stalin Prize 1951 1956 Return to the GDR, then until 1964 director of the Institute for Physical Chemistry of the Academy of Sciences of the GDR. The Presidium of the German Academy of Sciences of the GDR overturned the decision made in 1945

Exclusion from the academy resumed in 1955. From August 1957 to 1965 he was chairman and then honorary chairman of the GDR Research Council. From September 1960 to November 1963, Thiessen was a non-party member of the GDR State Council. He received the USSR State Prize, the Order of Lenin and the Order of the Red Banner and was also a member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.

Manfred von Ardenne (1907-1997), researcher in applied physics with around 600 inventions and patents in radio and television technology, electron microscopy, nuclear, plasma and medical technology. In 1930 he succeeded in creating the world's first fully electronic television transmission using a cathode ray tube. Since 1945 he worked in the Soviet Union. Returned to the GDR, where he founded the research institute named after him on the White Hirsch in Dresden. With 500 employees, it was the largest private institute

managed companies of this type in the socialist states.

Member of the People's Chamber until 1990. 1947 Stalin Prize, twice National Prize of the GDR, 1989 honorary citizen of the city of Dresden.

Friedrich Paulus (1890-1957), German military man, commander of the 6th Army, which sank in the Stalingrad pocket in 1943.

While still in the cauldron, Hitler appointed him field marshal. Witness in the Nuremberg war crimes trial in 1946. Released from Soviet captivity in 1953. He opposed Bonn's policy of division and its integration into the West.

Klaus Fuchs (1911-1988), nuclear physicist who, as a communist, went into exile in Great Britain in 1933, where he worked on the British nuclear program since 1941. 1943 moved to the USA and continued work. He

was instrumental in the development of the plutonium bomb "Fat Man," which was used against Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. Since 1942 he worked for Soviet military intelligence, his courier was Ruth Werner. Sentenced to 14 years in prison for espionage in 1950. Pardoned in 1959 and emigrated to the GDR, although he was offered several well-paid positions in the West. Member of the SED since 1967, and of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences of the GDR since 1972, which made him head of the physics, nuclear and materials science research area from 1974 to 1978. From 1984 head of the scientific councils for basic energy research and for the principles of microelectronics.

National Prize Winner 1975. 1983 Member of the Committee for Scientific Questions on Securing Peace and Disarmament and Honorary Member of the Research Council of the

GDR.

Max Steenbeck (1904-1981), physicist, from

From 1927 to 1945 he was head of the scientific department at Siemens-Schuckert-Werke, then from 1945 to 1956 he worked on the Soviet nuclear program. In Jena he headed the Institute for Magnetic Materials from 1956 to 1960 and was director of the resulting Institute for Magnetohydrodynamics until 1969. He was a member of the GDR Research Council since 1957, its chairman since 1965 and honorary chairman from 1978 until his death. Since 1956 full member of the Academy of Sciences of the GDR, its vice-president from 1962 to 1966. Since 1966 Foreign member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. from 1970 President of the GDR Committee for Security and Cooperation in Europe and in this capacity took part in the conferences in Helsinki. He was

Member of the Presidium of the Peace Council of the GDR. National Prize of the GDR in 1959 and 1971, 1977 Alfried Krupp von Bohlen und Halbach Prize for Energy Research. since 1969 honorary citizen of the city of Jena.

Hermann Klare (1909-2003), chemist, after the war operations manager in chemical factories in Premnitz and Schwarza. From 1947 to 1949 he helped set up an artificial silk production plant in the city of Klin in the Soviet Union, which was brought to the USSR from Landsberg an der Warta as reparations.

1949 operations manager, from 1951 director of the VEB Kunstfarbenwerk Schwarza. 1953 Institute for Fiber Research of the German Academy of Sciences, from 1961 to 1969



Institute Director. From 1954 to 1961 he was also a professor at the Leuna-Merseburg Technical University of Chemistry and from 1962 to 1964 at the Humboldt University in Berlin.

Since 1961 Chairman of the research community of the scientific, technical and medical institutes of the German Academy of Sciences. Vice President of the AdW from 1963 to 1968, President from 1968 to 1979, and again from 1979 to 1984

Vice President. He was also chairman of the AdW chemistry class from 1980 to 1988.

National Prize of the GDR in 1951 and 1963.

Kurt Schwabe (1905-1983), chemist, pioneer of electrochemical sensors. In 1945 he founded the "Research Institute for Chemical Technology" (today: Kurt Schwabe Institute) in Meinsberg, and in 1949 he became a professor at the TU Dresden. From 1959 to 1969 director of the "Institute for Radiochemistry" at the Central Institute for Nuclear Research in Rossendorf and from 1961 to 1965 rector of the Technical University of Dresden. From 1965 to 1980 President of the Saxon Academy

Sciences, Vice President of the Academy of Sciences of the GDR in 1971, and Vice President of the International Society of Electrochemistry from 1980 until his death. 1961 National Prize of the GDR, 1982 honorary citizen of the city of Reichenbach in Vogtland. The Saxon Academy of Sciences has been awarding the Kurt Schwabe Prize since 1983 "to honor outstanding scientific or technical achievements and high contributions to the conservation of nature and its resources."

Kaiser Wilhelm Institute, name of a number of scientific institutes in Germany before the Second World War, after 1945 Max Planck Institute. At the Berliner

At the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Physics, Otto Hahn and Fritz Straßmann discovered nuclear fission in 1938. Thiessen headed the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Physical Chemistry, which was founded in Berlin-Dahlem in 1911

Electrochemistry.

Robert Rompe (1905-1993), physicist, KPD

1932, since 1935 employee of the Soviet

Military reconnaissance GRU. From 1933 to 1936 he was a member of Hermann Ulfert's illegal group, and later he also had contacts with other resistance groups. Repeatedly imprisoned and interrogated from 1935 to 1945. From 1939 to 1945 biophysicist at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Genetics in Berlin-Buch. From 1945 to 1949 head of the main department for universities and scientific institutions in the Central Administration for National Education, from 1946 to 1949 member of SED party executive committee. From 1949 to 1970 head of the Physical and Technical Institute of the AdW. Rompe lost all political office in connection with the Noel Field affair, but was fully rehabilitated after Stalin's death. Member of the SED Central Committee since 1958. Member of the SED from 1957 to 1990

Research Council. From 1963 to 1968 deputy and acting general secretary of the AdW. National Prize 1951.

People's educator

Margot Honecker

It was always about the thing, not about people

Margot Honecker-Feist, born in 1927, KPD in 1945. Co-founder of the Antifascist Youth Committee in Halle. 1946 SED. FDJ functions in the state of Saxony-Anhalt, from 1949 to 1953 secretary of the FDJ central council and chairwoman of the pioneer organization.

1953 marriage to Erich Honecker. Visit to the Komsomol University in Moscow. Afterwards functions in the Ministry of Education. From 1963

Minister for National Education in the GDR until 1989. From 1950 to 1989 candidate or member of the Central Committee of the SED. With short interruptions, member of the People's Chamber from 1949 to 1990.

After a forced stay in Moscow, exile in Chile since 1992.

You come from a communist family in Halle. Did you hear anything about Ulbricht there before 1945?

Thälmann was the first name of a labor leader that stuck with me as a child. I only heard about Ulbricht later. After my father returned from Buchenwald in 1939, he took

illegal work resumes. At meetings in which I took part as one of the young helpers, the comrades talked about Radio Moscow broadcasts in which Pieck, Ulbricht and others had spoken.

When I began active political work in 1945, I heard about the "Ulbricht Group," which had come from Moscow to begin building a peaceful, democratic Germany. I soon saw Walter Ulbricht at rallies, and often at consultations during the time of the People's Congress movement<sup>1</sup>. I experienced him very closely, especially on the

Central Committee meetings chaired by Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl. In 1950 I became a candidate for the Central Committee. When Walter spoke up, I wasn't the only one listening because he always focused very specifically on the next tasks and argued very clearly and convincingly.

You became a member of the KPD in 1945. Of the approximately 300,000 members in 1933, only a little more than half had survived the fascist dictatorship, war and emigration. That the failure to establish an anti-fascist defensive front and the fratricidal war between social democrats and

Communists had significantly helped the Nazis was already on the

"Brussels Party Conference" in 1935 was self-critically stated. Some comrades blamed the SPD exclusively for this failure, which was of course sectarian: The line was

"Learn from the mistakes of the past, end the fratricidal conflict and create a common party." How did you experience these conflicts back then?

The fact is: the KPD had bled the most of all parties in the fight for the interests of the German people. Rudi Jäger, the head of the

illegal regional committee Halle-Merseburg (later he was FDGB chairman of Saxony-Anhalt), remembered that after the arrests in 1934, in a second wave of arrests the following year, 240 functionaries and 800 party members were imprisoned in our territory alone. That was bitter. But what was even more bitter was that now, after the war, people next to us said: We didn't know all that! Over a thousand people suddenly disappeared. Or later, when the Jews were deported. You didn't want to notice that? We had to swallow hard to keep calm and

to remain objective.

My father was a staunch supporter of the unification of the KPD and SPD. Nevertheless, he sometimes couldn't help but say bitter, critical words about comrades in the SPD.

I myself sometimes came home from youth meetings quite dejected and despondent. It was sometimes depressing to hear and see how young people who were my age or younger were stuck in their Nazi-era thinking. We tried to make it clear to them that the victory over Hitler's Germany was not a personal defeat, not the end of the

German history, but rather the chance for a new life, for a new social order.

Walter Ulbricht, who perceived this very clearly, encouraged us youth officials not to despair, to spare no effort to win over all young people by involving them and giving them responsibility. There is no other way. Without the participation of all young people it would not be possible to create a new Germany. Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht constantly repeated that German youth were not responsible for the crimes

of fascism, she was not complicit. She can fight for her own future without any burden. And that would be in a unified, anti-fascist-democratic Germany.

Walter Ulbricht was in Halle several times after the war. Can you still remember that?

Naturally. I particularly remember one of the rallies on Hallmarkt; it must have been before the state elections in October 1946.

Bernard Koenen<sup>2</sup>, native of Hamburg, who took part in many struggles of the working class in central Germany in the ranks of the KPD

took part, spoke to us, then Ulbricht stepped to the microphone. He particularly commented on economic issues, because there were large chemical companies in our region that needed to be restarted.

Incidentally, the members of the Free German Youth ran for office in all three parties. I remember many an election meeting at which I spoke for the SED list and the youth secretary of the LDP, Rudolf Agsten<sup>3</sup>, spoke for his party. We appeared at meetings with common positions, but at times we also represented very strong ones

different points of view. Later, as members of the People's Chamber together, we sometimes laughed at our former situation "Opponents" during the 1946 election campaign. It was also during this time that I got to know and appreciate Gerald Götting<sup>4</sup>. However, I did not meet Hans-Dietrich Genscher<sup>5</sup>, who was also with the Halle Liberals at the time.

The GDR is accused of having "ordained" anti-fascism. Who was on your mind back then when you were in Halle after the war against the fascist ideology?

worked, prescribed this?

No one. This corresponded to my experience and belief. It is one of the most infamous lies of our opponents to claim that we were not anti-fascist. We know this evil verdict from Kurt Schumacher<sup>6</sup> of the "red-painted fascists," which he imposed on the communists in May 1946 – one year after the end of the Nazi dictatorship! Such slogans were intended to obscure and forget that German imperialism gave birth to fascism.

The ruling capitalist class wanted world domination to secure markets and resources, and

therefore, it needed a political order that could most effectively enforce this. The Nazi Party seemed to German big business to be the most effective instrument for this. Helping Hitler & Co. to power was not an industrial accident. The chapter always creates the best production and exploitation conditions, even back then.

His hunger for profit demanded a reorganization of Europe and the world, and that through war.

The interests of German monopoly capital were and are never identical to the interests of the German people. Unfortunately, the majority of them allowed themselves to be manipulated

and seduce. It followed the Nazis into national catastrophe. And of all us, who enlightened us after 1945, who made this seduction visible, who identified the intertwining of economic and political interests, and what's more: we who eliminated the roots of fascism and war by expropriating war criminals, punished those guilty of fascism and war, To accuse us of all people of not acting out of anti-fascist conviction is demagogic and disingenuous.

The truth is that all the victorious powers, the Allies, in...

The Potsdam Agreement stipulated that fascism had to be eradicated from its roots and that all conditions had to be created so that Germany could never again threaten its neighbors and the world. The whole of Germany should have consistently followed this path.

Those who learned from history drew the right conclusions.

Incidentally, it is significant that in capitalist Germany it is never about fascism, but always about

"National Socialism" was and is spoken and written about. This is also a deliberate concealment of the social origins and

class character of this capitalist dictatorship.

Schumacher's obscure thesis is repeatedly brought out and attempted to be supported, for example with the meeting between leading officials of the FDJ and former Hitler Youth leaders in January 1951. There was a film about it on ARD ("Brown Heritage. The Antifascism of the GDR"). , which aired on December 13, 2007 – significantly, on

"Pioneer's Birthday."

I remember this meeting well at the beginning of 1951; after all, I chaired it on behalf of the Secretariat of the Central Council. Erich Honecker

as chairman of the FDJ met with the participants at the end.

To put it briefly: the rifts between us were deep, but through dialogue we looked together for ways to halt the development that was emerging with the remilitarization of West Germany. Our concern, which is always ignored in the presentation of this meeting today: the effort to stop the further drifting apart of West and East Germany, to prevent war and, in the long term, to restore the unity of Germany. All such activities were under the watchword

"Germans at one table!" The German Youth Meeting at Whitsun 1950 and the Oberhof Athletes' Talks, the first of which took place in February 1951, and many other German-German encounters at that time can be seen in this context.

Our encounter with some former leaders of the Hitler Youth, which was banned as criminal in 1945 along with the NSDAP and other fascist organizations, did not mean joining forces with Nazis, as is assumed, but was an - admittedly unsuccessful - attempt to talk to West Germans who were willing to talk against

tackling the Cold War. The hurdles that these people had to overcome to have such a shared conversation were at least as high as ours.

On October 7, 1949, the German People's Council constituted itself as the Provisional People's Chamber and elected Wilhelm Pieck<sup>7</sup> as President of the GDR. That was the reaction to the founding of a federal republic in the three western zones. The meeting took place in the building of the German Economic Commission on Leipziger Strasse, today the headquarters of the Federal Ministry of Finance. You were 22 years old at the time and the youngest

Representative, and, if I understand correctly, you are the only living participant in this historic act

...

My friend Heinz Keßler was also there.

Yes, that's right, but if I may say so, he was a little older than you... Anyway, you were the youngest member of the People's Chamber and gave Pieck the bouquet of flowers.

The President, unlike Parliament, did not wear the attribute

"provisionally".

Just the word "provisional" showed that we were keeping the door open. For us, the founding was one

There was nothing final about the second German state; German unity remained the goal. We wanted to preserve the chance that progressive, patriotic forces in the West could still succeed in thwarting the development of a separate Western state. We wanted a unified, democratic Germany. The Soviet Union supported this political course because it was in both Germany's and its own interests. There should be no Germany from which wars could originate. However, when the Federal Republic of Germany joined the NATO military pact in the mid-1950s, the division was cemented.

How did you even become an MP back then?

I ran for the People's Congress in Halle in the spring of 1949. Candidates had previously been put forward in the states and provinces after appropriate public meetings. The ballot papers said "I am for the unity of Germany and a just peace treaty<sup>8</sup>. I am

therefore voting for the following list of candidates for the Third German People's Congress. Then followed the names and two circles "Yes" and "No", which had to be marked alternately. The election took place in mid-May, on the 29th/30th.

In May 1949, more than two thousand delegates from East and West met. The Congress elected the People's Council and adopted - with one dissenting vote - the draft constitution.

There is this photo of you and Pieck from October 7, 1949 with the bouquet of flowers...

That was one of the most moving moments in my life. As a young thing, I stood in front of Wilhelm Pieck, who had turned gray during the fighting. The heart was pounding hard. But the excitement passed when Wilhelm Pieck smiled encouragingly at me in his fatherly manner.

As Minister for Public Education you have

played a key role in the development and implementation of the law on the uniform socialist education system of February 25, 1965. The almost two-year public debate on this important law was a significant example of socialist democracy - now largely forgotten. What disputes were there back then?

The law has its roots in the school reform that took place after 1945, with which we broke the educational privilege. With the "Law for the Democratization of German Schools" from the year

In 1948, principles for the development of a democratic school system were anchored in Germany for the first time. Walter Ulbricht personally always paid great attention to school policy, which ultimately led to the question being discussed after the 2nd party conference<sup>9</sup> as to whether an eight-year school education met the social requirements towards socialism. A broad discussion began.

When errors and exaggerations were corrected after the events of 1953, let's say revisionist views also came to light. They ranged from demands

after the abolition of Russian lessons to the general questioning of ten-class school education. On the 3.

At the party conference in 1956, but especially at the fifth party conference in 1958, such views were discussed. This paved the way for further social development. In terms of school policy, there was now a continuous development of the ten-class school with a polytechnic orientation.

At the Fifth Party Congress, Walter Ulbricht explained that the introduction of polytechnic teaching was a key question in the development of a...

new socialist school. This was an important strategic orientation. It was discussed with experts and parents, commissions discussed and evaluated practical experiences, and international developments were studied. All of this ultimately flowed into a democratic legislative process.

When I met Walter Ulbricht, he was always interested in the topic and kept me informed about the progress of the work, asking questions and giving advice. At that time there were hardly any voices left that considered a uniform ten-grade school education to be wrong

who rejected preschool education for all children. The focus of the discussion was now on educational and, not least, economic questions. Because education costs money; it is an investment that only "pays off" much later.

Two years after the adoption of our law, Walter Ulbricht pointed out at the VIIIth Party Congress in 1967 that the democratic development of the law on uniform socialist education and the law itself were of outstanding importance for the design of the social system of socialism. The law covered all areas - from

Pre-school education through to university - and gave all children the same opportunities and opportunities without distinction. It focused on a high level of general education, a solid, broad basic education and the development of independent, creative thinking. In short: This law from 1965 determined the profile of a new, modern type of school.

Can you remember any incidents in which Ulbricht also showed a private interest in this topic? After all: Ulbricht's finally had an adopted daughter<sup>10</sup> of school age?

In 1959 we had the introduction

of a lesson in production (UTP). In this way, students were introduced to the sphere of production. Skilled workers, master craftsmen, trainers and cooperative farmers imparted knowledge and attitudes to life.

Erich and I went to Ulbricht's for coffee with our daughter on a Sunday afternoon. Walter asked Sonja how the polytechnic lessons were going at her school and whether she liked them. Sonja shook her head and complained that it wasn't a lesson at all, they just had to read potatoes in the LPG. Lotte interjected that this was also necessary

would be, and besides, as a city dweller you would always learn something while working in the fields. Walter interrupted her - not because he didn't share his wife's opinion, but because, as he said, he wanted to know what the students thought about this subject and whether it would be accepted.

It took some time until we had created the conditions for solid teaching in this subject.

Ulbricht repeatedly spoke about these development problems, including at the 11th plenum of the Central Committee in 1965. There he complained about a certain narrowness in the secondary school

and in vocational training and called for improving the level of basic technical training. He referred to Marx and Engels, who had proven that the combination of lessons with productive work and gymnastics was necessary for all-round personal development. Many progressive educators had already addressed this question.

School reformers in Germany developed the work school idea, which, however, was primarily oriented towards work preparation. The German teachers' assembly developed the concept of education

then further, advocated all-round general education. We therefore used the ideas and experiences that had been made in this field in the past, but which could only be realized under socialist conditions.

It was not an easy path; it took about a decade and a half until the ten-class polytechnic high school was implemented across the board in the GDR. And Walter Ulbricht played a significant role in this.

I find the "consultation" of the Chairman of the State Council with your daughter Sonja interesting. Now I ask you as a mother, not as

Minister: Could he have children? Yes. He was what is commonly called fond of children. I don't mean those supposed affection among politicians who - as soon as a camera is nearby - hug children, hug them and stroke their heads because such gestures are supposedly well received by the electorate. Ulbricht took children seriously and had a natural affection.

You could feel this even in small incidents. Once Sonja was in the hospital. Ulbricht was busy at the hospital for other reasons; I don't know whether he was visiting someone or was there himself for an examination.

In any case, he noticed that ours

The little one was in the children's ward and he spontaneously stopped by. He knew how children suffer when they are alone, especially in a hospital.

Back to big politics. In 1953, Beria and his supporters tried to give up the GDR. The SED leadership demanded that Ulbricht should be relieved of his party position.

At that time, Honecker sided with Ulbricht. How did you experience this time?

This attack by Beria<sup>11</sup> was not about Ulbricht as a person. It was about the general line of the SED, which Walter Ulbricht consistently represented, and it worked

about the GDR. Beria wanted a neutral Germany with a coalition government and thus a kind of buffer zone between the West and the Soviet Union. But that meant nothing other than the abandonment of the GDR and socialism in Germany.

In this situation, and even after that

XX. At the 1956 CPSU party conference, there were fluctuations in the party leadership and attacks on Walter Ulbricht in the Politburo. Erich always sided with Walter Ulbricht in defending the general line. According to the report that Erich made at the 30th plenum of the Central Committee, the Central Committee stood behind Walter Ulbricht and

decided the further development of the GDR towards socialism.

Beria's attack failed because of our party's attitude, and it had to fail because abandoning the GDR was objectively also directed against the interests of the USSR. After all, the peoples of the Soviet Union had not bled for the emergence of a revanchist, peace-threatening Germany in the heart of Europe.

In the 1960s, the GDR media conveyed an image of harmony between Ulbricht and Honecker and their wives. In 1970 this changed. What happened?

I don't remember the GDR media talking about private matters, such as our coffee afternoons together or ski trips at the turn of the year. This has always been and is even more so today a popular field for the bourgeois press, where many flowers sprout. But your question is more about whether the relationship between the Ulbrichts and the Honeckers changed over time, whether there were differences of opinion and criticism of Walter Ulbricht's decisions. Basically: Political differences of opinion do not remain when politicians work together

out of. In this case, however, they did not diminish the respectful relationship with Walter, although I admit that at that time, when he was already old and sick, he did not always make things easy for his comrades.

When we, my husband and I, accompanied Lotte Ulbricht on Walter's last journey through the crowded streets of Berlin in the summer of 1973, we did not see this as a farewell to his politics, but rather as a farewell to a person who would be with us in many years had come close to common political struggles.

I meant the change from Walter to

Erich at the head of the party...

It wasn't about people, not about Walter Ulbricht and not about Erich Honecker, but about the GDR and what political and economic measures had to be taken in order to further develop the country. Of course, decisions that were associated with his name also had

to be critically examined. As a member of the Council of Ministers, I knew about the difficulties in the economy and their impact on other areas of social life. The scientific and technical revolution had raised or exacerbated structural questions in the economy,

which resulted from the division of Germany. We were still burdened by the fact that the main economic sectors were traditionally located in western Germany. We had no choice but to initially concentrate almost everything on building up the heavy and chemical industries, which meant that other branches were left behind.

Decisions that accompanied the development of the New Economic System of planning and management of the national economy and with which the already strained economic plans were given additional tasks exacerbated the disproportions in the economy

National economy. They questioned the planned and proportional development of the national economy. The impact on social policy tasks has already had a disruptive effect. On the 14th

At the Central Committee meeting in 1970, the problems were critically analyzed and conclusions were drawn.

When it is written today that the New Economic System of planning and managing the national economy was liquidated by Moscow and Honecker, ignorance is at play or one wants to distract from the real causes of our serious defeat in 1990. Walter Ulbricht had

In the middle of 1965 a critical assessment of the NÖSPL was drawn and on the VIIth Party Congress conclusions derived from this.

The fundamentally correct orientation towards the use of the scientific-technical revolution and a higher level of independent management activity of the large economic combines, which was aimed at achieving higher labor productivity, was not completed in 1970/71, but was continued, which was reflected in both individual measures and the Development of national income in these years is not difficult to determine. Have been corrected and withdrawn

Exaggerations and exaggerations that collided with economic realities. Relevant resolutions were passed at the Eighth Party Congress. These were aimed at stabilizing the economy and its further growth with the aim of ever better satisfying people's social, material and cultural needs. After all, this is the purpose of a socialist economy.

We knew it then, and we see it no differently today, that the relationship between the GDR and the Soviet Union was of existential importance for us. Juliy Kvitinsky,

Once a diplomat at the embassy in Berlin and later ambassador of the Soviet Union in Bonn, in his memoirs he described his country's relationship with the GDR as "schizophrenic".

That says a lot and yet nothing. The relations between our two countries cannot be described in one sentence. They can only be understood if they are considered embedded in international politics, i.e. in a historical context. The fact remains: the Soviet Union had its closest and most loyal ally in the GDR.

Together with the German communists and anti-fascists

the Soviet people fought to liberate Germany from fascism.

But, and this is also true: the relations were between a great power and a small state, and a great power has its own national interests that are of great importance to it. The GDR was a country with almost no raw materials; it was economically dependent on the Soviet Union, which of course also had an impact on relations.

History will confirm that the USSR-GDR alliance was a decisive one for decades

Contributed to the preservation of peace in Europe. One should never forget that the Soviet Union bore the heaviest burden in the fight for world peace. This seems to be somewhat lost when one reduces our relations to the adoption of the Soviet model of socialism. This is - whether knowingly or unknowingly - the adoption of one of the "arguments" against socialism in the GDR, which ignores the actual development.

Of course, we used the experience of the Soviet Union, after all, it was there that the new territory of socialism was first explored. In the Soviet-occupied

Zone, later in the GDR, different conditions prevailed. As a result, we took different paths with land reform, education reform, and the upheaval in the national economy... In addition to public ownership, there was also cooperative and private ownership. We had a multi-party system, etc. This means that the GDR society was based on different foundations than those in the Soviet Union, so there was also an independent development.

Of course, over the years of our close cooperation there have also been stupid things, on our side I would mention attempts at imitation, on theirs

Page the tendency to interfere in our affairs. There were differences of opinion in the relationship between the big brother and the little brother, including those of a serious nature such as those already mentioned in connection with Beria. In the economic relations, which did not exist independently of the global economy, not everything went smoothly. The GDR had to swallow a lot here. After oil prices rose on the world market, the Soviet Union demanded a corresponding price from the GDR. This hit us to the core and disrupted what we had planned

development in question. It endangered the GDR.

In foreign policy, when the Soviet Union acted as a great power vis-à-vis the major Western powers, there were similarities, but also controversy, sometimes even sand in the works when the Soviet leadership judged things differently than the leadership of the GDR. I just recall the deployment of Soviet medium-range missiles on our territory in response to the actions of the West. This was neither politically nor economically easy for the GDR to digest.

When the interests of the GDR are ignored

or were ignored, our party leadership, starting with Pieck, opposed it. Not always with success. Despite all the quarrels, the brotherly alliance with the GDR was never dissolved. This only happened because of the betrayal of Gorbachev and his entourage. Step by step, under the veil of perestroika, they have abandoned all Marxist-Leninist principles. This ultimately ended in chaos. The once strong Soviet Union staggered towards defeat. And its leadership pandered to the USA and the Federal Republic of Germany, it became dependent on them and threw principles of international solidarity overboard.

It opened the gates to the counter-revolution. The decline of the once powerful Soviet Union was the downfall of the GDR and the entire socialist camp.

It turned out that peaceful coexistence, as described by Lenin, does not eliminate the conflicts of interests between the systems, that the struggle between them continues, that class struggle remains at the international and national levels. This leadership in Moscow had forgotten this or ignored it. That's bitter but true.

For some, Ulbricht is one

"Stalinist", for others a worker

at the head of state. Some call him a "puppet of Moscow," others a German patriot. For some he is an incorrigible dogmatist, for others a courageous reformer.

For some, the "Saxon villain". In 1966, the well-known bourgeois journalist Sebastian Haffner described Ulbricht as the most successful German politician after Bismarck and alongside Adenauer. He said that after Adenauer's departure, Ulbricht has no opponent in Germany who could hold a candle to him.

If you look back and Walter Ulbricht in the contradictory history of the 20th century

classify, what would you particularly like to highlight?

Every person, including every politician, has strengths and weaknesses, they can err and make mistakes, make mistakes that can have serious consequences. But in order to judge fairly, these errors should always be viewed in the context of time and space.

I am reluctant to emphasize this strength or that weakness of Walter Ulbricht. Labels that are given to our politicians or boxes that one would like to put them in are stupid and serve to falsify history, ultimately this is part of the anti-communist campaign,

which they lead out of fear of the specter of socialism.

It cannot be erased from history: Walter Ulbricht was one of the outstanding leaders of the German and international workers' movement.

The People's Congress movement was, on the one hand, the answer to the divisive tendencies of the Western powers and their political allies in the Western occupation zones and, on the other hand, the necessary and legitimate attempt to create an anti-fascist-democratic order in a common Germany on the rubble of the Nazi Empire. In December 1947, delegates from all occupied zones came to Berlin for the First World War.

People's Congress together. The initiative worked – as it did in the national discussion

a draft of a "Constitution of the German Democratic Republic" presented in November 1946 – from the SED

Bernard Koenen (1889-1964), SPD since

1907, KPD since 1920. During the November Revolution he was deputy chairman of the workers' council of the Leuna Works and was actively involved in the armed struggles in central Germany. Since 1923 he was a member of the KPD headquarters in Berlin. The Nazis beat him up during "Eisleben Bloody Sunday" on February 12, 1933, and he lost an eye. Emigration and 1937 victim of the "party purges" in the Soviet Union, from 1941 worked for the German Volkssender in Moscow, co-founder of the SED, member of the Central Committee until 1964, from 1946 to 1952 parliamentary group leader in the state parliament of Saxony-Anhalt, then ambassador to Czechoslovakia 1958 until his death, first secretary of the SED Halle district leadership. member of

State Council since 1960.

Rudolf Agsten (1926-2008) came from Soviet captivity in 1946, where he had already joined the Liberal Democratic Party. From 1948 to 1953 editor-in-chief, later secretary of the central board of the LDPD. Party leader in the People's Chamber from 1954 to 1989. In October 1989, Agsten resigned from all social functions due to a heart attack.

Gerald Götting, born in 1923, had been a member of the CDU in Halle since January 1946. From 1947 to 1949 he studied philology, German and history at the Martin Luther University in Halle-Wittenberg. From 1949 to 1966 he was General Secretary as successor to Georg Dertinger and chairman of the CDU until 1989 as successor to August Bach. From 1960 to 1989 he was also

Deputy Chairman of the State Council. President of the People's Chamber from 1969 to 1976. On November 2, 1989, Götting resigned as CDU chairman and was recalled from the State Council on November 7. In February 1991 he left the CDU. Hans-Dietrich Genscher, born in 1927, studied law and economics in Halle (Saale) and Leipzig after the war and then worked as a trainee lawyer in the Halle Higher Regional Court. In 1952 he went to the Federal Republic of Germany. Genscher joined the NSDAP in 1944 - allegedly without his knowledge - and the LDP in 1946. After serving several positions, he was elected deputy chairman of the Liberals in 1968 and federal chairman in 1974 (until 1985). From 1974 to 1992 Federal Foreign Minister and Vice Chancellor.

Kurt Schumacher (1895-1952), war volunteer on August 2, 1914, four

Months later he lost his right arm. Studied law in Halle, Leipzig and Berlin, joined the SPD in 1918. Member of the state parliament 1923-1931, chairman of the SPD in Stuttgart 1930 and member of the Reichstag in 1930, from 1933 to 1945 concentration camp stays with few interruptions. In the British zone, he began rebuilding the SPD immediately after its liberation; in October 1945, at the first central meeting of Social Democrats from the three western zones in Wennigsen near Hanover, he was tasked with rebuilding the SPD in the western zones. Otto Grotewohl from the Berlin Central Committee of the SPD was only allowed to speak there after a protest. Schumacher named Grotewohl and the Social Democrats, who wanted a unified workers' party, as well as the communists "Interest representatives of a foreign power". Four weeks after the unification of the SPD and

KPD to SED, Schumacher was elected party leader of the SPD in the three western occupation zones with 244 of 245 votes. The avowed anti-communist became opposition leader in the first Bundestag. In 1949, Schumacher ran in the elections for the office of Federal President, but was defeated by the FDP candidate Theodor Heuss.

Wilhelm Pieck (1876-1960), carpenter, SPD in 1895, founding member of the KPD in 1918, member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in 1921, member of the Presidium from 1931, exile from 1933 to 1945, first in France, then in the Soviet Union. In 1935, at the KPD's Brussels conference, he was elected party leader for the duration of Thälmann's imprisonment. Co-chairman (with Grotewohl) of the SED since its founding. From 1949 until his death, he was the first (and only) president of the GDR.

Peace treaty with Germany: War and fascism ended with the unconditional surrender of the Hitler state on May 8, 1945. The Potsdam Agreement regulated the occupation status of the four main victorious powers. All later attempts to reach a common peace treaty under the conditions of German two-statehood failed due to the destructive policies of the Western powers. In fact, the so-called 4+2 Treaty of September 1990 represented this peace treaty: it established the sovereignty of the two German states, finally determined the borders and clarified all open questions. Only with this vote by the victorious powers was it possible to establish German unity under international law.

The 2nd party conference of the SED in the summer of 1952 decided to build the foundations of socialism in the GDR, which not only

had political consequences, but also administrative consequences. The federal structure was ended with the dissolution of the five East German states and 15 districts took their place.

Beate Ulbricht (1944-1991), daughter of a Ukrainian forced laborer and an unknown Leipzig native, was adopted by the Ulbrichts from an orphanage in January 1946. Beate attended a special Russian school in Berlin-Pankow since 1954, and in 1959 she went to Leningrad, where she graduated from high school. There she also began studying history and Russian. After two short marital relationships, the birth of a daughter and a son, interruptions in her studies and changing places of life and activities, as well as the withdrawal of custody of her children in the late 1970s, her life became lost in alcohol and anti-social behavior. She was born at the end of 1991

Murdered apartment in Berlin-Lichtenberg, the murder has not been solved to this day.

Lavrenti P. Beria (1899-1953), People's Commissar for Internal Affairs (NKVD) since 1938, formed the State Defense Committee together with Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov and Malenkov after the attack by Hitler's Germany in 1941, which replaced the government during the Great Patriotic War. After the war was Marshal Beria

Among other things, he was responsible for the Soviet atomic bomb program. After Stalin's death on March 5, 1953, he became First Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister under Georgi Malenkov.

Günter Wilms

He initiated an education system that others envied

Günter Wilms, born in 1927, new teacher in 1946, studied and received his doctorate at the Technical University of Dresden and at the Humboldt University in Berlin, lecturer and vice-rector at the Ernst Moritz Arndt University of Greifswald. Responsible for the training and further education of educators in the GDR Ministry of Public Education. Then as a professor and

Institute director at the Potsdam University of Education, member of the newly founded Academy of Pedagogical Sciences in 1970 and its vice president. From 1980 to 1990 he was head of the Potsdam-based Academy Institute for the Management and Organization of National Education ("ILO").



After 1990, he worked primarily as a journalist in the educational and scientific field. Educational issues had a firm place in Walter Ulbricht's political work. Ensuring a high level of education for all children and creating the necessary conditions for it.

He paid great attention to the necessary conditions. This was particularly reflected in his speech at the III. SED party conference in March 1956. There he formulated the task of introducing polytechnic teaching in all schools and of ensuring that 40 percent of all students attended ten-grade schools by the end of 1960. Ulbricht aimed to develop the ten-grade school as a compulsory school for all girls and boys.

This task was reflected in the resolutions of the Fifth Party Congress of the SED in July 1958.

Afterwards, in October, Walter Ulbricht consulted with teachers and teachers in Leipzig.

Educators discussed the further development of the socialist school and dealt with the view that the knowledge imparted in the eight-year primary school was sufficient to become a good skilled worker. He explained that the policies of the SED and the GDR were aimed at raising the general level of education in order to enable people to lead a cultural life in prosperity and happiness. And last but not least, the progressive modernization, mechanization and automation of production, Ulbricht continues, and the introduction of modern technology in socialist agriculture pose higher demands.

Demands that can no longer be met with previous primary school education and without polytechnic training. It is therefore necessary to switch to ten years of polytechnic schooling.

The "Law on the Socialist Development of the School System in the GDR" passed in December 1959 served to realize this goal. In order to concentrate all forces on the implementation of this law, Ulbricht, as First Secretary, addressed an open "Letter from the Central Committee of the SED to all school party organizations",

in which he dealt in detail with the tasks to be carried out in schools. This letter testified to the great respect he had for educators. On the VI. At the SED party conference in January 1963, Ulbricht emphasized that the path taken in school policy was correct and expedient. He called the establishment of the ten-class school, the introduction of polytechnic teaching and the close connection between school and real life successful. With reference to profound social changes and the scientific and technical revolution

under socialist conditions he demanded fundamental consequences for the entire education system. So it wasn't just about school development, but about the education system as a whole, from kindergarten to adult education. Ulbricht also believed that steps were necessary to overcome the traditional separation between general education and vocational training.

Since the development of education affects all areas of society, Ulbricht suggested to the Council of Ministers that one should be founded

»State commission for the design of the unified socialist

Education System", in which all problems relating to the further development of the education system would be discussed and put up for public discussion.

This commission was launched in March 1963. Alexander Abusch, a deputy to the Prime Minister, was appointed chairman. The members represented all areas of science and life that are important for education: educators - kindergarten teachers, teachers, educators, school directors, university professors -, psychologists, doctors, sports scientists, economists, sociologists, historians, philosophers,

Mathematicians, scientists and musicians. Academies, parties, individual unions, state, industrial and agricultural bodies were present.

The composition alone showed that the problems of the education system were viewed from a society-wide perspective and should also be solved by society as a whole. Education was at the center of social development. The commission steered the process of developing principles for two years, relying on preparatory scientific work by the German Central Pedagogical Institute, and stimulated an extensive

public discussion about it. More than

5,000 written statements with criticism and suggestions were examined and taken into account by working groups. The commission finally presented the resulting draft, which was passed by the People's Chamber in February 1965 as the "Law on the Uniform Socialist Education System".

The development of the education system was conceived as a process integrated into the development of society as a whole, as a unit of education and upbringing, starting with the crèche through kindergarten and high school up to the

vocational, higher education and continuing education. It was the progressive continuation of the anti-fascist-democratic school reform of 1946, aimed at the personal development of adolescents and the teaching of socialist-humanistic values.

The reflection on the progressive educational heritage of the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries (Johann Comenius, Johann Pestalozzi, Adolph Diesterweg and others) and on the educational policy traditions of the labor movement (Clara Zetkin, Edwin Hoernle etc.) forced a critical review of one's own considerations and conveyed

Suggestions for decisions to be made. This concerned the belief in the ability of every person to educate and develop and the respect for their dignity and personality. Every person had the right to education and training according to their abilities, inclinations and interests. Every person is gifted, and talent is not something predetermined by birth. And finally, we were convinced that individuality and personality are expressed in community with others.

The 1965 law did not change the state of education

rather than its long-term development being designed over at least 15 to 20 years. When it was drafted, great importance was attached to ensuring that the law did not become a corset and was open to future developments in society and science. For example, vocational training was redesigned towards a combination of basic vocational and specialized vocational training and the path of combining vocational training with a high school diploma was systematically expanded, especially at company vocational schools.

When drafting the law, attention was focused from the outset on the entirety of the financial, material and personnel conditions - knowing that what was necessary could only be created gradually and within the framework of economic possibilities. This affected the construction of schools and school gymnasiums, equipping schools with furniture and teaching materials, and the development and production of school books and educational literature. But it also affected the training and further education of teachers and educators. A long-term program developed in parallel

Last but not least, training of teachers and educators ensured that the class frequency in schools could be reduced to a pedagogically sensible size: in 1989 it was an average of 20.4 students per class.

The compulsory teaching hours - in 1989 they were 21 to 23 hours per week - could also be regulated so that teachers had the opportunity to look after each student individually in and outside of class.

The focus of the work in the 60s and 70s was the construction of the ten-class general polytechnic high school

Determination of the specific characteristics and content of the various educational paths, the redefinition of the relationship between general and vocational education and the development of the new content of general education.

When determining the content, pedagogy and school policy were based on the classic German concept of education, which is inextricably linked to the name Wilhelm von Humboldt.

With regard to the canon for general education, the traditional educational areas were the basis. There came a new area that also influenced the traditional areas

polytechnic education added. This was more than a simple expansion of the range of subjects, as it significantly increased the preparation of young people for life.

The details of the educational canon were constantly worked on, especially in connection with the development of the curricula for general secondary schools

"filed". Developments in science and society, but above all experiences in school practice, provided suggestions. In the 1980s, the following distribution of educational areas in the high school subject range emerged:

German language

12.8

percent

literature

10.1

percent

mathematics

17.7

percent

Social science

Instruction

10.9

percent

Scientific

Instruction

12.2

percent

Polytechnic classes

11.0

percent

foreign languages

11.0  
percent  
Art education and music  
6.8  
percent  
Physical education  
7.5

Percent If you look at the two and a half decades

balance sheet, in which the law about the

uniform socialist education system worked, one cannot avoid highlighting the contribution of Walter Ulbricht. Due to his initiative on the VI. At the SED party conference in 1963, an education system was created in the GDR that represented an important educational policy and pedagogical achievement. It took into account German and international educational traditions, was uniform and had consistent educational paths. It has also been continually developed further.

This education system included preschool education facilities (nurseries and kindergartens), the ten-class general polytechnic high school, vocational training facilities (municipal and company vocational schools), educational institutions leading to university entrance qualifications (extended high schools, vocational training with a high school diploma, adult education centers, technical schools), engineering and... Technical schools, universities and colleges as well as adult education institutions (adult education centers, company academies in industrial companies, etc

agriculture and administration). The GDR was able to do that for everyone

Children and young people received a ten-year comprehensive high school education and everyone who did not take the high school diploma and thus university studies received full vocational training with a secure job afterwards. They had the opportunity to complete a technical school course. The effects achieved can be seen in the development of the qualification structure of the GDR population:

The number of skilled workers and master craftsmen rose from 25.8 percent in 1955 to 64 percent in 1985.

The number of university and technical school cadres rose from 4.3 percent in 1955 to 21 percent in 1985.

The number of unskilled and semi-skilled workers fell from 69.9 percent in 1955 to 15 percent in 1985.

The education system, as it developed on the basis of the law of 1965, was an integral part of the overall social system of the GDR. Hundreds of thousands of educators, supported by parents, scientists and workers in companies and administrations, made it this way through their hard work. It was enjoyed internationally, also in the organization

the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), received high recognition and was seen in many countries, not least in a number of developing countries, as an example of a truly humanistic education system.

What then happened to this education system after the GDR was annexed to the Federal Republic of Germany was a relapse into a socially unjust system characterized by educational privileges. That was and is irresponsible towards the children and young people of this country.

Walter Wiemer

Statesmanlike thinking at the VIIth Pedagogical Congress

Walter Wiemer, born in 1931, born and grew up in East Prussia, after the war ox driver, farmhand and farm worker, worked on his father's new farm in the Uckermark since 1948. Joined the FDJ, participant in the torchlight procession October 11, 1949 in Berlin and the III. World Festival of Youth and Students 1951. Afterwards new teacher,

later distance learning history and German and in the mid-1960s attended the Pedagogical Institute in Leipzig. From 1969 to 1989 he was director of the Hermann Matern School in Brüssow near Prenzlau, which was closed in 2002 due to a lack of students.

Brüssow has perhaps two thousand inhabitants and is located in the Uckermark. During GDR times we were part of the Pasewalk district, today we are the state of Brandenburg. In 1935, Hitler gave Field Marshal August von Mackensen<sup>1</sup> the Prussian domain of Brüssow, which was over 1,200 hectares of land plus forests and lakes

was later declared a hereditary farm and visited the place twice himself. The military man, who was already 86 years old at the time, brought Albrecht Schönherr, a student of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to Brüssow. It was Schönherr's first pastorate from 1937 to 1946. In 1969 Schönherr became chairman of the Association of Evangelical Churches in the GDR. Bishop Schönherr shaped the attitude and formula of the "Church in socialism" ("not against, not alongside, but in socialism") and consistently continued the policy of dialogue between church and state leadership, which began with the meeting of the Thuringian regional bishop Moritz Mitzenheim and

Walter Ulbricht had begun at the Wartburg. In the late summer of 1964, Ulbricht visited the churchman at his official residence in Eisenach.

Mitzenheim was the only one of six GDR bishops who visited Ulbricht on his 70th birthday a year ago.

birthday personally. The churchman had also signed the election manifesto of the National Council of the National Front in the fall of 1963 and countered his critics: "They call me a 'red bishop'. That's right. Because there is also a 'Red Cross' – and that brings help!" During this two-hour encounter, Walter Ulbricht later said, he had him

Kirchenmann also asked to allow "visits of people of retirement age to their relatives in the West German Federal Republic and in the special area of West Berlin and vice versa." He promised "that your suggestions will be examined immediately by us." As Ulbricht said in a letter to Mitzenheim three weeks after this encounter, the GDR government had "looked into the matter" and instructed the Interior Minister to make such visits possible. "Yours sincerely, W. Ulbricht."

Since November 2, 1964, the then around three million GDR residents had

Pensioners have the opportunity to travel "to the West" for a total of four weeks each year.

Bishop Schönherr, as I said, took up the conversation again and met with Ulbricht's successor as Chairman of the State Council in 1978.

None of this has anything to do with the incident I want to tell. But I wanted to make it clear that even in very small places like Brüssow, where today there are only tiny elementary schools due to a lack of children, great history is sometimes reflected from which many things can be derived and learned. I think I have this as a teacher

can convey little, which I also see with satisfaction from the many invitations to class reunions that I receive. Grandparents and great-grandparents, whom I once accompanied as a teacher on their way into life, now come together there.

In May 1970 I was a participant

VII Pedagogical Congress in Berlin. Meetings of this kind took place at long intervals. It was their responsibility to bring the direction of school development in the GDR to a certain conclusion after thorough discussion of the problems that had arisen. The discussion phase for preparation

It usually lasted three to four years in schools and was essentially controlled by the education and training union and the pedagogical district cabinet, which was subordinate to the district school office.

The number of delegates per district was five to ten. The school committees, from which a teacher was to be sent according to the quota, decided on this in an open vote. Five educators came from the Pasewalk district, three of whom I can still remember: colleague Melzer, colleagues Lewin and Belz, plus someone else and me.

So about one and a half thousand came

Delegates gathered in the Berlin Dynamo sports hall, with foreign guests and the press sitting in the stands. The Minister of Education<sup>2</sup> gave the keynote speech. In it she spoke about topics from kindergarten to the Abitur, and further up to universities, from lessons in the lower school classes to specialist teaching in all areas of knowledge in the ten-class polytechnic high schools through to studies at the teacher training institutes and universities, which the subject teachers prepared for the lessons. Nothing was left out.

Even school meals, drinking milk and medical care for the children in the facilities received appropriate attention. The minister, it seemed, had a realistic picture of everyday life in the classrooms and teachers' rooms.

The productive work of the students from grade 7 onwards in the companies was widely examined, every supposed wound was pointed out and every useful innovation was recommended for imitation.

That was the general tenor that we recorded.

Walter Ulbricht sat in the hall on the four days of the congress and watched

pay attention to the debate. His place on the presidium was rarely vacant. When the conference leader gave him the floor on the last day, the hall seemed to be bursting with tension.

The 76-year-old visibly climbed the few steps to the lectern with difficulty, as if he had difficulty walking. His first sentences were repeatedly interrupted by coughing fits; he appeared to be in poor health and uncertain. But after a few minutes he had caught himself, his voice seemed firmer, he had found his rhythm. This was followed by an hour and a half excursus on German history, the lesson of one

age-old statesman that touched everyone in the room. Ulbricht outlined the path of the struggle of the oppressed layers of the German people from the founding of the GDR to the present day. Logic and historical necessity appeared to be of one piece. And Ulbricht himself was history. A life of a century.

He referred to this or that speech several times, and often he even knew where the speaker was sitting because he pointed his hand in that direction. Anyone who had never met Ulbricht was both amazed and impressed by his memory and by the clarity and persuasiveness of his arguments.

At the end of his speech, as many expected, he said something about our salaries. Despite major problems in many areas of our society, says Ulbricht, something will soon be done for teachers and educators. Our income has stagnated for probably seven years.

The final applause was correspondingly strong.

In the weeks following the convention, several neighborhood school principals asked me for a personal report. I remember there was lively discussion.

But there was particularly great joy about the salary increase

The amount of 60 to 80 marks was not expected.

1 August von Mackensen (1849-1945), son of a Saxon estate manager, attended the state high school in Torgau, which - before it became the "Ernst Schneller" extended high school - was called Mackensen-Gymnasium. After campaigns in Poland and the Balkans ("Serb Butcher"), he was military governor in Romania from 1916 to 1918. As a representative of the stab-in-the-back legend and enemy of the Weimar Republic, he was courted by the fascists. In November 1944, when von Mackensen was already 95 years old, he made an appeal to young people to help them

To admonish "willingness to sacrifice and fanaticism".

Margot Honecker, Minister of Public Education since 1963, contacted the author from Chile in 2013 after she had met him in 2009

misplaced autobiographical memories

»Shared balance sheet. "Striving for, Destroying, Preserving" had read. He also reported in detail about this congress.

Gregor Schirmer

The three university reforms and Ulbricht's intentions

Gregor Schirmer, born in 1932, grew up in Nuremberg, joined the KPD in 1949, moved to the GDR in 1950, studied law at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, then international law at the Academy of Political and Legal Sciences Potsdam-Babelsberg, doctorate at the Humboldt University in Berlin, 1965

Habilitation, from 1963 to 1990 Member of the People's Chamber (Culture Association), Deputy Minister for Higher Education and Technical Education (until 1976), then until 1989 Deputy Head of the Science Department in the Central Committee of the SED. Schirmer worked for members of the PDS and the Left faction in the Bundestag and is a member of the Association for International Politics and International Law, the Marxist Forum and the Council of Elders of the Left Party.

I first met Walter Ulbricht in 1946 with Max Fechner,

the former SPD man in the second row of the SED, came to a large rally on the main market in Nuremberg. They were staying at that time

During their visits to the base, the "leading comrades" did not stay in hotels, of which there were only a few in the bombed-out city. They were given private accommodation for food and overnight stay. My father was district chairman of the KPD in Northern Bavaria. So WU lived with us on the 2nd floor of an apartment building in the Johannis district of Nuremberg, like Wilhelm Pieck, Max Reimann and others before him. I was already used to my small room and

To clear the bed for out-of-town guests. I accompanied Ulbricht and Fechner to the main market with my father.

In the last hundred meters to the stands there was friendly applause from the rally participants who were still streaming in, but also insults from troublemakers, to whom the two of them owed nothing.

The rally was peaceful and, with tens of thousands of participants, was a complete success for the KPD, which only received 5.3 percent of the vote in the elections for the Bavarian Constituent Assembly.

After the rally it was late

into the night in our living room we discussed lively with WU and Max Fechner. As I remember it, Fritz Sperling and Rudi Singer were also involved. I was later told that WU had severely criticized my father for his pessimism about the possibility of land reform in Bavaria and noted: "Just don't give him the party in Bavaria." Hermann Schirmer was nevertheless state chairman of the KPD in 1948 without Ulbricht's objection become.

My mother entertained everyone in the living room with her inimitable hospitality. The next

That day it didn't bother WU that he had to do his morning toilet at the sink in the kitchen because there was no other opportunity.

I was very impressed with WU. Our second meeting took place shortly after I moved to the GDR

instead of. I was invited to the 1st Officials' Conference of the FDJ on November 26, 1950 and saw Walter Ulbricht, who was at the III. Party Congress of the SED became General Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED. He has the youth to

"Campaign for the appropriation of science and culture" was called for. WU was able to achieve an enormous

To spread a spirit of optimism. He sharply criticized the tardiness of those responsible for higher education in the Ministry of Education and gave noticeable impetus to the development that was later called the 2nd higher education reform. This reform was

heavily influenced by the Soviet model of higher education. What else should the new German power organs have taken as a guide when shaping the work of universities and colleges?

Should they leave everything as it is in higher education like in the West?

Walter Ulbricht also polemicized against the bad habits, agitation and work assignments during the

to allow lesson time to take place. The main task of the students is "learn, learn and learn again".

His speech strengthened my intention to start studying as soon as possible. From 1951 to 1955 I experienced the second university reform in practice as studiosus iuris at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig. Carefree studying was financially secured. Almost everyone received a basic scholarship and almost half of the students received a performance allowance.

There were no tuition fees. The right to professional work after studying was guaranteed.

The studies went according to a strict plan

in a "ten-month academic year" and was "thoroughly organized" with compulsory lectures, seminars, exams, internships, etc. The students were grouped into seminar groups.

We had close relationships with our professors, lecturers and assistants. The principle of unity of training and education applied.

The universities and colleges should not only impart knowledge and skills at the highest possible scientific and pedagogical level, but should also turn students into convinced activists in building the new society

educate. The compulsory basic course in social sciences, introduced in 1951, played a central role.

We first-year students saw the innovations as a matter of course and there was nothing wrong with them. On the contrary. We knew where we were in the course of our studies, which lectures, seminars and exercises we had to attend and when, which exams we had to take, etc.

The second university reform was undoubtedly associated with a schooling of studies, the curriculum with compulsory courses

overloaded. The students' independent scientific work should be part of the training, but in practice the students' personal responsibility and their problem-solving were not sufficiently challenged.

I have less fond memories of the third encounter with WU; it took place during the Babelsberg Political and Legal Science Conference

April 2nd and 3rd, 1958. Ulbricht – in my opinion at the peak of his power – condemned harshly

"Dissenters" among legal scholars who are supposedly stuck in bourgeois legal thinking

be. They would be influenced by capitalist ideology, infected by "formalism and dogmatism" and corrupted by a lack of practicality.

His reckoning with "oppositional" lawyers was part of the punitive measures against rebellious intellectuals that took place after the 20th century. They had ventured too far at the 1956 CPSU party congress and should now be disciplined.

In the First Secretary's field of fire was the legal theorist Hermann Klenner, who, according to Ulbricht, had allegedly tried to "blur the class character of law." He "completely detached himself from life" and "the connection

lost with the base". Ulbricht generalized that "the lagging behind in political and legal science is due to the fact that the main question, the question of political power, is not taken as the basis of the entire work." Many scientists would accept the party's decisions for their personal behavior and political views, but not for their science. "In reality, however, the party's decisions create the basis of political and legal science."

This made it clear what was really at stake: the party decisions as the highest guideline of science

and to degrade the jurisprudence that is close to power to a mere instrument of this power. There was no longer any room for scientific creativity.

As a young party secretary and aspirant at the Humboldt University Law Faculty, I took seriously Ulbricht's mandate that "the party organizations should systematically and constantly organize the fight against all opportunist, revisionist and other hidden bourgeois ideologies in the work of our political and legal sciences." I gave a sharp discussion at the conference. Under

My responsibilities at the faculty subsequently became endless

"critical and self-critical" arguments and the party proceedings were carried out, which ended with a strict reprimand for Hermann Klenner and Bernhard Graefrath and with a reprimand for Uwe-Jens Heuer.

"For the purpose of education in practice," Klenner and Graefrath were appointed mayors of communities in the eastern Berlin area and were employed at the Berlin contract court. Even if it was only a temporary banishment, I will not boast about that.

For the fourth time I experienced WU in connection with the 3.

University reform (1968 to 1970). I am not exaggerating when I say that he was the spirit of reform. His share was later hushed up.

He already had conceptual considerations and objectives in the VI. The SED party conference was developed in 1963 and was included in the new party program. There was a further "redesign of technical and university studies" with the focus on "unity of scientific training" and

"the scientific and productive activity of students" is proclaimed.

The third university reform was about renewing universities,

Universities and technical schools that corresponded to and served what was then called the comprehensive construction of socialism and the shaping of socialism as a developed social system.

The university reform was directly related to the New Economic System, which WU had stimulated in the 1960s. He explained at the time "that the 3.

University reform is a necessary and important link in the chain of measures to shape the developed system of socialism, in two respects: firstly, it is necessary in order to achieve the real

To satisfy the needs of our society, especially the economy, for further development of the productive forces, that is, the university reform is necessary in order to realize the economic system of socialism and to carry out the scientific and technical revolution on its basis.

Secondly - this is just as important - we need the university reform in order to create the socialist human community in which the working people can develop and develop into well-educated socialist personalities." The university reform

is "a constant and long-lasting revolutionary process". In doing so, Ulbricht set high standards that, in my opinion, the practice of socialist construction could not meet.

The reform deviated from the Soviet model no less than the New Economic System. Basically, it was a criticism of essential aspects of the Soviet model adopted with the second university reform.

The university reform fell into the period of Ulbricht's politics, in which he tried to go the GDR's own way. That's why our partners in Moscow watched our university reform with suspicion, but they didn't have it

hindered or even pushed for demolition. I learned this during my visits to the Soviet Union and also as host to Soviet counterparts in the GDR. In any case, there was no direct interference.

This was probably because higher education policy was not important enough for the Eastern hegemony to object and make regulations in this area.

WU had an "antenna" for the indispensable and growing role of science and higher education in realizing its vision of socialism. And he also cared for one – albeit often

selective – communication with scientists. Walter Ulbricht's visits to the University of Rostock in 1965, to the Bergakademie Freiberg in 1966, to the TU Dresden in 1966 and to the Friedrich Schiller University Jena in 1968 were not just protocol events, but real consultations. They showed his personal interest in the preparation and implementation of the reform. For him, science and higher education were necessary means of overcoming the growing gap between the GDR economy and the West. He was pretty clear about that

A scientific and technical revolution took place across systems that had to be mastered if real socialism wanted to win the world historical competition. However, Ulbricht listened too much to the agile Günter Mittag, for whom universities were more like scientific and technical service companies for industry. Who encouraged whom in subjectivistic exaggerations during the reform, for example "Large research centers", the contractual nature of university research, the "pioneering and top achievements", the "Marxist-Leninist

Organizational Science", the doubling of the number of graduates etc. I have to leave it open: I don't know.

The aim of the reform was set out in October 1966 in a paper that was only twelve pages long and contained relatively few ideological preludes ("Principles for the further development of teaching and research at the universities of the German Democratic Republic").

There was also a draft "The management of universities", as well as drafts for three legal regulations, the regulation on the appointment and position of university lecturers, the regulation on

the scientific staff and the regulation on academic degrees, which came into force in 1968. The documents were prepared in the ministry with the help of many scientists. They were exposed to a centrally controlled, yet broad and constructively critical debate at the universities, among their partners and in social organizations and were confirmed by the IVth University Conference in February 1967. Over 600 suggested changes were made, many of which were incorporated.

The Central Council of the FDJ also made detailed suggestions. The

The concept for the reform and its details were developed in a democratic process. I can judge this because I was responsible for reporting to the university conference on the course and outcome of the debate on the draft regulations.

From my current perspective, Ulbricht's university reform was an attempt to reshape universities and colleges in their entirety so that they correspond to the objective requirements of science, economy and society. In the "Principles" it said: "The essence of

The necessary changes at universities in the GDR consist of concentrating and profiling teaching and research in accordance with the prognostic assessment of the needs of the economy, the sciences and social development in such a way that a scientific lead is

created and research results that can be used productively are available more quickly and socialist cadres are trained who have broad basic scientific knowledge and work creatively and partisanly for the socialist society. The

at the same time serves the further development of socialist democracy.«

The university reform was also a reaction to the critical 1968 student movement in the West. At the time of the protest against the there

“Smell from a thousand years under the gowns,” Ulbricht called on the FDJ students to get heavily involved in the GDR's university reform.

It is worth mentioning that the State Council directed higher education reform for a while. This corresponded to Walter Ulbricht's understanding of the state and his desire to have one in addition to the party apparatus in the form of the State Council, of which he was chairman

to create an independent second power base. The State Council met under his chairmanship three times - on October 4, 1968, on January 20, 1969 and on January 3.

April 1969 - about the university reform, the first and third times he did this with numerous guests. A State Council commission was set up to prepare a draft resolution. The draft was submitted for public discussion at universities and colleges and their partners. 2,575 suggestions for changes and additions were counted.

The resolution of the State Council of the GDR of April 3, 1969 (“The continuation of the 3rd university reform and the

Development of the higher education system until 1975») summarized the concerns of the reform.

After Ulbricht changed to Honecker in 1971, after just two years, the decision disappeared quietly and unnoticed from the university policy landscape.

From my point of view I can't say that behind the temporary

“Takeover of power” by the State Council. There were differences of opinion in the SED Central Committee on university policy issues. The key people from the Central Committee worked as members of the State Council Commission

“Taking Power” with – Kurt Hager as

Chairman, Günter Mittag and Johannes Hörnig as head of the Science Department of the ZK. The New Economic System had not yet been canceled at that time. However, the State Council episode of the university reform was a significant expression of the power tussle between Ulbricht and Honecker. At the Eighth Party Congress, the new First Secretary only mentioned the third university reform in passing.

However, later attempts at reform did not end there.

physical culture

Klaus Huhn

He promoted the development of sport like no other politician

Klaus Huhn, born in 1928, volunteered at the Deutsche Volkszeitung at the age of 17, joined the KPD in 1945, worked in New Germany from 1946 to 1990, most of the time as its sports director and member of the editorial board, since 1954 head of organization of the International Peace Trip, founding member of the DTSB and member of the DTSB until 1989

Federal Executive Board, 1983 doctorate at the DHfK. From 1976 to 1993 he was on the board of the European Sports Journalists Association (UEPS), most recently as Vice President and Secretary General. Huhn founded the spotless publishing house in 1990. I met Walter Ulbricht for the first time in the summer of 1945. I was seventeen, the cycling city reporter for the KPD organ Deutsche Volkszeitung, and he came to the editorial office with Wilhelm Pieck somewhere from Friedrichsfelde, where the KPD headquarters was located and probably also stayed on Zimmerstrasse, on the lower floor of which is a Soviet one

Sector border command was quartered. (On the opposite side of the street, the command of the US occupying force resided in a cleared out bar.)

The two came to the editorial office to tell us - briefly and clearly - where things were going and what the party leadership expected from the newspaper.

The editorial team consisted of a sextet: four emigrants who had returned from Moscow - including Wolfgang Leonhard -, a Berlin comrade as secretary, and me. We sat in three rooms whose windows - glass was out of the question - had roll-up plastic dismantled somewhere

had been boarded up. I can't remember exactly the details of that afternoon, but the first thing both of us recommended was to tell the readers as precisely as possible every day what was changing in the city, because the subway tunnels were still closed The exit stairs were under water, the tram overhead lines were painstakingly repaired by the meter and there were kilometer-long queues at the few bus stops. A pound of butter cost around 800 Reichsmarks on the black market, and when buying it you had to make sure that it was the piece of butter presented



It was not a plywood box fraudulently covered in golden butter.

It is therefore understandable that in these weeks of bare subsistence security, readers were not so much interested in what the Allies were discussing in Paris or London, but rather in when and how, for example, people got from the desert of rubble in the center to Lichtenberg in order to find out whether the factory hall, in which they had worked until the end of the war, was still standing. We knew how important this was to readers, but they both reinforced it and pointed it out

that we would have to assert ourselves with comprehensive information against the newspapers in the other sectors and also against the Berliner Zeitung published by the magistrate and the Daily Rundschau of the Soviet occupying power. "They should ask for the Volkszeitung at the kiosks if they want to know what to expect the next day!" explained Ulbricht. Of course, it was also important to both of them that we provided intensive information about the party and, for example, told us in which district a new group had been founded and where their office could be found. It can be done today

It is difficult to understand how difficult it was back then to win people over to the communists after twelve years of the most brutal anti-communism. I explained to the group that I was making little progress in setting up a youth group in the area where I live in Britz, i.e. in the American sector. None of my best friends wanted to make themselves unpopular with the occupiers. One day the Soviet occupying power let the editorial team know that they would not accept an editor at the Volkszeitung who lived in the American sector. But since I don't have an apartment in the Soviet sector

the Soviet officers recommended that I at least write under a pseudonym. From then on I was called "Klaus Ullrich" in the newspaper, a name that I was to keep until 1990. When I later moved to the Soviet sector with my parents, the editor-in-chief of Neue Deutschland advised me to stick with the familiar name because nobody knew Klaus Huhn. The result of that afternoon instruction by Pieck and Ulbricht was that both of them greeted me wherever I met them. One day the editor-in-chief gave me a meal ticket for the

The house on Wallstrasse that has now been occupied by the party leadership. From then on I could even have claimed: "I often had lunch with Walter Ulbricht." We sat in the same dining room and ate stew together. Soon afterwards, in addition to the duties of local reporter, I also took on the role of sports editor, because the person who previously delivered the sports texts on Fridays and Mondays was not available. So on October 1, 1948, I was sent to Kronenstrasse in Berlin, where the FDGB and FDJ founded the German Sports Committee. I sat next to Helmut Schön from Dresden, later

National soccer coach who, like me, was one of the founding members. I was appointed as a kind of press officer. As a result, I drove to Oberhof at the beginning of February 1949, and because no one had gasoline for such a long journey, we holed up in a truck that was powered by a wood gas kiln. The first winter sports championships of the Soviet-occupied zone were supposed to begin there on February 11th, but many problems had to be overcome before the first competition could start. The hotel owners were not willing to give their beds to the athletes for just two

Marks per night, but the German Economic Commission had not approved more than that for overnight stays. Then Peter played a trick on us when...

February 10 thaw came. The secretariat of the German Sports Committee considered postponing the competitions. I voted against it and hoped for winter to return. I called the head of the Potsdam weather station, whom I knew as a local reporter. Runge assured me that the cold and snow were heading towards Oberhof. I persuaded the officials and went for a walk the next morning in sub-zero temperatures

Proven weather prophet proudly walks through the freshly snow-covered Oberhof. Walter Ulbricht came on Sunday. His first order of business was to congratulate me on my meteorological forecast. He did this in the company of all the winners, whom he had invited to dinner at the "Thüringer Hof". That was unbelievable at the time, because even the athletes' meals were meager - many had brought their own food from home. Above all, it was a turbulent lunchtime that lasted almost into the evening because Ulbricht had asked those present not only to ask questions about the future of sport,

but also to make suggestions. The ice hockey players and figure skaters spoke first. Training and competitions depend on the weather, which is why they called for an ice rink to be built. The Berlin ice hockey players suggested that two burned-out cold storage halls at the Berlin slaughterhouse could be pushed together for this purpose. Their cooling systems were still working. The problem is the roof.

Walter Ulbricht listened to these and other suggestions and commissioned Berlin to examine the project for a rubble hall. I remember

I don't remember all the details, but I do remember that the responsible city councilor was transferred because he vigorously refused. The press in the West took this as further evidence of Ulbricht's dictatorial style - but in 1950 this hall was ceremoniously opened.

Teams from Weißwasser, Frankenhausen, Crimmitschau and Berlin were assigned their training times, a GDR championship was held, and one day the Soviet national team even appeared - mostly former bandy players, because ice hockey was still almost unknown there - who were intensively preparing for their first Participation in

prepared for a world championship. On April 22, 1951, the first international match against the USSR took place in this hall - and was lost 2:21.

Four months earlier, the world's first amateur cycling track had been built in the hall, and in the following years not only party conferences and congresses, but also European boxing championships and other international competitions took place there. In 1992, the Werner-Seelenbinder Hall - although still fully functional - was demolished because Berlin wanted to bid for the 2000 Olympic Games and a building was built on the foundation of this legendary hall

Velodrome and a swimming and diving hall should be built.

I remind you of the origins of this sports hall, one of the most important Berlin sports facilities in the 20th century, also because it was due to the fact that Ulbricht knew how to listen very carefully. He not only heard the athletes' complaints, but also carefully noted their suggestions.

Walter Ulbricht declared in that same hall at the 2nd party conference that he wanted to create the foundations for socialism. In his speech he also commented on sports. »Socialist Germany needs healthy,

"strong-willed, trained, purposeful people," he said back then, in July 1952. "The Politburo has commented on the criticism and suggestions of the athletes and considers it necessary for a State Committee for Sports and Physical Culture with appropriate bodies in the districts and circles."

The motive for this demand probably arose from his numerous visits to sporting events.

The German Sports Committee worked too sluggishly, often got into fruitless arguments about trivialities and tried to demonstrate its weaknesses through supposed successes

to conceal when recruiting members. Walter Ulbricht did not allow himself to be fooled and considered a state authority to be a sensible alternative. He sent the sports leadership on a study trip to the Soviet Union.

A few days after the party conference, the State Committee was founded, along with bodies responsible for sport in the districts and districts.

However, this step did not have the success he had hoped for. On the III. At the 1955 sports conference, Walter Ulbricht unequivocally criticized:

»We are far behind in the development of mass sport

must be corrected." With sharp words he criticized the fact that the State Committee had dissolved the mass sports department, which once again refuted the claim that Ulbricht was only interested in international victories and medals.

But what about them?

"Diplomats in tracksuits" that our athletes were often referred to as? This formulation comes from Lord Burghley, member of the British House of Lords and President of the International Athletics Federation (IAAF). He also invited GDR athletes to a sports festival in London

but were refused entry after the Federal Republic of Germany intervened with the British Foreign Office. Burghley ensured that this decision was reversed and congratulated the victorious long-distance athlete Siegfried Herrmann with the words: "You are a diplomat in a tracksuit." Walter Ulbricht later quoted the British Lord.

It was obvious that GDR athletes - and certainly Ulbricht too - had dreamed of taking part in the Olympic Games ever since the new sports movement was founded. The government of the Federal Republic of Germany took action in 1952

demonstrably - and successfully - everything to prevent GDR athletes from taking part in the games in Helsinki.

In 1954, IOC President Brundage (USA) began looking for ways to satisfy both the FRG's claim to sole representation and the GDR's right to participate in the Olympic Games. In 1955 in Paris he suggested to the IOC that the teams from both German states start in a joint team at the 1956 Winter Games in Cortina and at the Summer Games in Melbourne.

Sports historians like to suppress the fact that the Federal Republic of Germany was in Paris at the time

voted against this proposal - but remained in the minority with this attitude.

In this two-country team, the GDR won its first Olympic medal in Cortina, GDR champion Harry Glaß won bronze in skip jumping.

At the fifth party conference of the SED in 1959, Walter Ulbricht again made massive criticism of the sports movement, and it was not aimed at top-class and competitive sports, but rather at youth sports in residential areas. His demand was brief and specific:

"Every young person plays sports!"

It must be mentioned that

Walter Ulbricht was one of the first to meet the requirements for the GDR sports badge in his age group. On June 3, 1959, a "Olympia meeting point" took place on a square in the stadium on Cantianstrasse. Events with this name were invented by the

Junge Welt sports editorial team to bring together GDR Olympians and interested young people. Walter Ulbricht recruited some people interested in volleyball for this "meeting point" among the members of the Politburo, who then formed a team and competed against a team of young people

sports officials took part.

I met Walter Ulbricht in Klingenthal almost every year. He came to the heights of skiing - the GDR was, by the way, the second country after Switzerland in which women's ski races took place. Ulbricht usually appeared on boards with his wife in the morning. In the evenings we often sat together and discussed current sports problems. Once we got into a heated argument that lasted for hours. The question was whether our figure skaters should appear in a "revue" or not. He was strongly against it. Dynamo Berlin wanted to come in for Christmas

In the Werner-Seelenbinder-Halle, a small revue was performed on runners, in which the most famous active people of the time were to take part. For some unknown reason, Walter Ulbricht was strictly against it and did not accept any argument. To this day I have not forgotten this argument because it was so unusual. I had and later saw Ulbricht many times taking note of everyone's arguments and then accepting them and correcting himself if necessary, but in this case he did not let himself be dissuaded from his opinion.

However, this Christmas revue still took place and was held several times due to its great popularity

repeated.

The dispute over the "Chef de mission" is not necessarily part of the Walter Ulbricht issue, but it was a chapter in the history of GDR sports. After the already mentioned vote in the IOC on the teams from both German states, there were a number of protocol questions that needed to be clarified. As is well known, the founder of modern games, Coubertin, was a Frenchman, and he used French to describe the functions in the teams. The office manager, whose job, among other things, was to prepare the buses for the teams for training

Ordering and settling questions about quarters was called chef de mission. Who should put him in the all-German team? West or East?

The federal government declared: As a matter of principle, no one from the East could become boss! The GDR hoped to end the seemingly endless dispute with the Solomonic proposal that the FRG provide the "chef de mission" at the Summer Games and the GDR provide the "Chef de mission" at the Winter Games. The team is also much smaller. Bonn didn't accept that either. The NOK head of the Federal Republic of Germany, Daume, was sent to Chicago to get the IOC president to do so

decided: Whoever had the most athletes on the team also nominated the "Chef de Mission". In Melbourne the ratio looked 132 to 37, people thought they were on the safe side.

Bonn thus triggered a race. There was no need for a political request from Walter Ulbricht for this duel, because every athlete wanted to win a ticket for the joint Olympic team in the elimination competitions. GDR sport, which was far more scientific and tightly organized, soon ensured that the situation was reversed. Four years after Melbourne, the one published in West Berlin warned

CDU newspaper Der Tag: "A red Chef de Mission – that was still missing. There is only one answer: use all means possible to confront the zone and put it back in its place." However, such appeals could not achieve much, because in sporting competition it was performance and not political slogans that decided!

Walter Ulbricht's welcoming speech after the return of the GDR Olympic team from Rome in 1960 - the GDR came twelfth with 16 medals - dealt at best peripherally with this sporting success. He was primarily concerned with war and peace and the role of Germany

(not the GDR or the FRG): »The appearance and successes of the German teams in Rome show how the German people can achieve respect and reputation in the world. On the battlefield there is no future, no glory and no honor, only death and ruin. The happy future of the German people, its fame and honor can only be secured in the field of work, science and culture, of which sport is also a part.

I would like to introduce Willi Ph. Knecht (1929-2005) as the key witness for Ulbricht's strategic sports policy. The head of the current department at

RIAS, partner of the Sports Information Service (sid) and editor-in-chief of the Olympic Sports Library. The Rhineland native was no friend of the GDR, but what set him apart from his peers was that he was capable of a certain realism. In 1977 I met him in a stadium and he told me that he was working on a book about GDR sports. It appeared soon afterwards with the title: "The Medal Collective. Facts, documents, comments on sport in the GDR«. In addition to many nasty omissions that revealed the anti-communist, there was also one

Chapter that earned him a lot of criticism in his circles. It was called: "Walter Ulbricht's stroke of luck."

»The politicization and ideologization of physical culture and sport in the GDR, the resulting classification as a socio-political factor of the first order and the upward development that in turn initiated up to the current level of the German Gymnastics and Sports

Association of the GDR are causally the work of a single man - Walter Ulbricht . As easy to understand in retrospect as his ideological motives and party objectives were, no other German politician has that

"I supported the establishment of a sports organization so emphatically and promoted the further development of sport into a general need for life as systematically as the long-standing Secretary General of the SED and Chairman of the GDR State Council," Knecht wrote there, to my astonishment.

»Inspired by a father who was enthusiastic about gymnastics and swimming and his penchant for sporting leisure activities was influenced by his early membership in the Leipzig workers' gymnastics club "Eiche", Walter Ulbricht was an active person throughout his life: daily morning exercises,

Swimming at least twice a week, volleyball, rowing, cycling or skiing depending on the season; Already over 60 years old, he still took private ice skating lessons. What began with gymnastics and gymnastics in the garden building of the Leipzig "Volkshaus" led almost 40 years later to large-scale sports policy.

One of his most far-sighted decisions was his order to found the German University of Physical Culture in Leipzig - against the resistance of part of the SED Politburo. Already on the tenth anniversary of this cadre factory

GDR-Sports saw Ulbricht confirm the correctness of his order: 'The university was opened in 1950.

A year and a half later, in 1952, the foundation stone was laid for the beautiful, spacious facilities that the working people of the GDR made available to socialist physical culture and athletes. Back then - you will remember - there were still some people in the GDR who said: Do we have to spend so much money on sport?

Don't we have more pressing expenses? Isn't everything planned too generously here? Although it wasn't easy for us at the time, it was in favor of the new university facilities and thus

decided in favor of our socialist sport, in favor of our youth and their harmonious development. Experience has justified these decisions. Today there is no one left who would say: "We should have used the money for more useful purposes back then," said Ulbricht in 1960, quoted by Willi Knecht. »»As a central teaching and research facility, the German University of Physical Culture now has responsibility for the entire development of physical culture and sport in all areas and also for the development of mass sport. This results in the German University for

Physical culture big tasks. Through training and practical activity, it must help the German Gymnastics and Sports Federation to develop popular sports quickly and in all directions.'

A good two years after Walter Ulbricht's death on August 1, 1973, the German University of Physical Culture was able to celebrate its 25th anniversary in October 1975 with an anniversary report that proves its indispensability for GDR sport. DHfK Rector Professor Dr. Günther Stiehler in his annual report: 'After the first 96 students were enrolled at the opening of the DHfK on October 22, 1950, there were...

In 1960 there were already more than 2,000 in direct and distance learning. In 1953 came the distance learning course for qualified sports teachers, the start of studies for school sports teachers, from 1958 the trainer-technical school distance learning course and from 1964 study forms for foreigners," Knecht quoted Rector Stiehler in 1975, and then continued: "In addition to the often neglected Other, socio-politically objectively at least equivalent tasks, Ulbricht provided GDR sport with quotable promotional slogans for two decades. Whether for popular sport or to hunt for titles and medals: The ›Friend of Youth and the

Athlete« always had a suitable slogan at hand, starting with the one for the III. German gymnastics and sports festival in 1959 created the slogan: 'Everyone, everywhere, sport once a week' - for a long time the most popular advertising verse in GDR sports. Towards the end of the summer of 1966, which brought the German Gymnastics and Sports Federation its first widespread breakthrough to the top level in competitive sports, Ulbricht said on September 19th at the reception of the medal winners of summer sports in the East Berlin headquarters of the State Council: 'We literally have nothing began. But step by step

Step by step things progressed. Physical culture and sport are an elementary part of our socialist development, and you are the embodiments of the highest achievements in this field.'

Ulbricht took not only sporting, but also highly political events as an appropriate opportunity to propagate the further development of sport; He made the topic of sport acceptable as a topic of speech for every occasion. He repeatedly used his full authority to "win the working people and young people over to sports and games even more than before," as was the case at the 11th.

Meeting of the State Council on September 20, 1968, when he all

social organizations to promote sport even more intensively: 'This makes it clear that physical culture and sport are inseparably linked to the shaping of the developed social system of socialism. It is important to deepen this knowledge everywhere and to ensure even better that physical culture and sport help shape the healthy, optimistic and creative way of life of our people in the socialist human community. The new goal in the field of physical culture applies to all citizens and to society as a whole: ›Everyone

Anywhere – exercise several times every week."

So much for Willi Knecht about Walter Ulbricht's contribution to sports policy in the GDR.

Another chapter of GDR sport was the Spartakiads - they were also promoted and supported by Walter Ulbricht. On September 8, 1964, he spoke to students and scientists from the DHfK and called on party officials, those working in the district and district offices and, above all, of course the sports movement, to make the Spartakiads a highlight. The first central Spartakiad took place in 1966 with 12,000 active participants in 23 summer sports

participated.

When the GDR traveled to the summer games with its own Olympic team for the first time, to Munich in 1972, he was no longer First Secretary of the SED Central Committee. Behind the USSR and the USA, the GDR took third place in the national rankings with 20 gold and 23 silver and bronze medals, ahead of the hosts FRG.

In the cinema of the Olympic Village, the Thorndike film about a district Spartakiad in Wernigerode was shown to an almost always overcrowded hall, and the rumor spread that the Bundeswehr Orchestra, which was at the

At the award ceremony, the winner's national anthem played, and they no longer needed any sheet music for the GDR anthem because they played it from memory - they had had to play this "risen from ruins and facing the future" so often.

The 79-year-old Walter Ulbricht experienced the most spectacular triumph in GDR sports to date on the screen. He had his part in that.

Heinz Wuschek

The DHfK in Leipzig was his child, it was the source of his sporting success

Heinz Wuschek, born in 1933, after an apprenticeship as a cylinder grinder and a high school diploma, studied at the German University for Physical Culture and Sport (DHfK), received a sports teacher diploma in 1954, then studied medicine in Leipzig. Surgical training in Spremberg and Berlin, sports doctor at SV Dynamo since 1962. Head physician at the sports medical department until 1976

Main advice center in Berlin and association doctor of the DSLV of the GDR in the Nordic ski disciplines and supervisor at the Olympic Games. Termination of his work for Dynamo due to contacts with the West. He then worked as chief surgeon for surgery at the Berlin-Weißensee Municipal Hospital until 1998. As a specialist in arthroscopy, he made a name for himself not only in the sports world.

It was a great honor for me when, as an 18-year-old football player from Unit Spremberg, I was appointed to the Brandenburg state team. I should be on this team in the summer

1951 at a tournament during the III. Play World Festival of Youth and Students. It was a great experience.

Helmut Bock, a Cologne native and five years older than me, was in charge of our team. He has been studying German, history and education at Humboldt University for three years. He was personable, eloquent and fulfilled all of our wishes.

After a year we were supposed to meet again unexpectedly.

After a cup game in Aue, in which I scored the winning goal for Spremberg, we had a meal together. Walter Tröger, a famous selection player, sat next to me

von Aue, as well as the two brothers Wolf and Binges Müller. The three of them worked on me. After passing my high school diploma, I should come to Aue and only play football. I could also complete an engineering degree. Room and board would of course be free, and I would get 200 marks "pocket money". - That sounded interesting.

Finally, a written invitation was sent to the job interview. At the beginning of July 1952 I got on the train to travel to Aue. This journey was supposed to take a whole day, many bridges had been destroyed in the war and the tracks had been dismantled as reparations.

In the train station in Cottbus I met a footballer from Brieske-Ost, with whom I had played in the Brandenburg state selection in the tournament during the World Festival in Berlin in the summer of 1951. He wanted to go to Leipzig to apply to study sports at the newly opened German University for Physical Culture and Sport. Since I had a four-hour layover in Leipzig, I accompanied him to the entrance exam out of pure curiosity.

Over a hundred applicants were already waiting in the building's huge anteroom. They were spoken to at different tables. Suddenly someone tapped me on the shoulder.

"What are you doing here? Do you want to study sports too?"

It was Helmut Bock. He has been at the DHfK since it opened. (He was supposed to take the state examination as a historian as an external student at the Karl Marx University in 1956 and work at the Central Institute for History of the Academy of Sciences in Berlin from 1971 to 1991.)

"No," I stuttered, "I'm just here by chance and I want to go to Aue!"

Consequently, the next question came:

"What do you want in Aue?"

I showed him the invitation. He paused and asked for my high school diploma, which I had in my old satchel

fingered.

»What, did you get such a good high school diploma? Why don't you want to study sport and play football at Lokomotiv Leipzig?"

I talked about the prospects I had in Aue.

"With us you live in the boarding school, have everything free, get the necessary sports clothing free of charge and a scholarship of 260 marks."

I was speechless.

"Here you have a direct course of study, but not in Aue," Bock added.

Maybe studying sports was really more interesting than studying mining? There were also 60

Mark more!

However, I had no idea what kind of institution the DHfK was, what happened there and the like. Bock gave tutoring: The university has existed since October 22, 1950, was personally initiated by Ulbricht, and the focus is on training sports teachers. The first year of training would have been released into practice in July after two years of training; the current course of study already lasts three years or six semesters.

I didn't go to Aue and enrolled in Leipzig.

At home I did some research. My soccer friend's brother-in-law

Werner Noack had until recently worked in the FDJ district leadership in Spremberg. He was now secretary of the Central Council and a member of the World Youth Council, and on top of that he also sat in the Brandenburg state parliament. So I asked Oskar Fischer if he could tell me something about this high school in Leipzig. He was able to. He put on my table the law on participation in the development of the GDR and the promotion of youth in school, work, sport and recreation, a resolution of the SED Central Committee on the tasks in the field of physical culture and sport from the 19th.

March 1950, a sports echo with one

Report on the laying of the foundation stone and handwritten notes that he himself made at the 2nd party conference...

What should I do with that? I asked, surprised if he couldn't tell me the most important thing in a nutshell. Oscar grinned.

We need physical education teachers and coaches, he said. And Ulbricht quoted from the Sportecho: "The laying of the foundation stone of this German University for Physical Culture and Sport is an important event for all of Germany, because this university is intended to develop the scientific work that is necessary for physical culture and sports movement in the future

a unified, peaceful and democratic Germany will point the way." I only understood Bahnhof.

There has been a sports university in Cologne since 1947, which is headed by Carl Diem. – I shrugged my shoulders.

Man, that's an old Nazi. He organized the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin and on March 18, 1945, in a fiery speech in the dome hall of the Berlin Olympic site, he called on the Hitler Youth to make a "final sacrifice for the Führer." In the following days, people died near the Reichssportfeld and at the

Pichelsdorf Bridges on both sides of the Heerstrasse Hundreds of young people trying to stop Soviet tank formations with small arms and rocket-propelled grenades.

And he is now the head of the sports university in Cologne and educates young people? I could not believe it.

Do you now understand why we have to make a different, anti-fascist new beginning here, said Oskar.

Yes, yes, I replied, but I just want to exercise.

When you study, you not only have to train your muscles, but also your brain. Always ask why something happened, how the connections are

and backgrounds are.

Well, let's wait and see, I thought. On April 15, 1953, there was great violence

Excitement at school. Ulbricht came and inquired about the progress of the construction work and the progress in the development of teaching. He spoke to us students and teachers in the auditorium. He was primarily concerned with questions of education. As if he had agreed with Oskar, he came to the conclusion that there should be no separation between technical education in the teaching and training process on the one hand and political-moral education on the other. That must be considered one

uniform process can be seen. In this context, words such as patriotism and love of homeland were used.

Ulbricht came to Leipzig a few more times; he obviously had a great personal interest in seeing something decent come about here that would last far into the future. Even if he always emphasized that mass and popular sport should not be neglected, after all it is essential for public health, the foundations for the successes in the following decades in top-class sport were laid primarily at the DHfK, which without the basic work was unthinkable.

I wasn't the only one who regretted that in 1975, when the founding of the university a quarter of a century ago was ceremoniously commemorated, the man who had laid more than just the foundation stone was only mentioned in a single sentence.

Gustav-Adolf ("Täve") Schur

Sport not just for titles and Olympic medals

Gustav-Adolf ("Täve") Schur, born in 1931, trained machine mechanic,

Cyclist since 1950. In 1952 he took part in the International Peace Tour for the first time, and in 1953 he was named GDR

Sportsman of the Year for the first time (eight more of these titles followed). 1958 and 1959

World champion, member of the all-German Olympic team in 1956 and 1960, in Melbourne he won bronze with the team, in

Rome silver in the team time trial. In 1963 he completed his coaching studies with a diploma at the DHfK in Leipzig. 1964 End of active sports career, then coach until 1973. In 1992 he opened a bicycle shop in Magdeburg, which is run by one of his four children. He was a member of the People's Chamber from 1958 to 1990, and from 1998 to 2002 he sat for the PDS in the German Bundestag.

In 1971 I went to Oberhof with my family to experience ski jumping. You had below the judges' tower

A grandstand was built at the Thuringia ski jump from which we watched the jump run. Our four children sat between my wife Renate and me. In the judges' tower I saw Walter and Lotte Ulbricht, and they seemed to recognize me, put the camera in front of their eyes and pulled the trigger.

She later sent us this photo and wrote on the back:

»Comrade Täve Schur: This photo taken by a layman from above during the Christmas jump in Oberhof. All the best to you and your family – Lotte Ulbricht – December 1971.«

The picture came in response to my Christmas greetings in 1972. On the

The attached letter said:

»Dear Täve! We were particularly pleased by your warm holiday wishes. Thank you very much for that. We also wish you and Renate all the best from the bottom of our hearts, the children - as long as they go to school - good success and, above all, a lot of fun playing and doing sports. Warmest regards, yours Walter and Lotte Ulbricht.«

It was not the first letter from the Ulbrichts, but it should have been the last with both of their names on it.

For the first time I had an official letter from him after the victory

World Cup in Reims 1958. »On behalf of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany, we warmly congratulate you on the bravely won world championship title for amateur road drivers. Your great victory is the result of your hard work and excellent attitude as an athlete. The working people, especially the youth of our republic, are proud of this. They rejoice with you because your victory is part of our common fight for peace and socialism. Your example is an incentive for many, the reputation of our Germans

Democratic Republic in the world. We wish you all the best for your professional and sporting development.«

Anyone who is able to read carefully will see that it was not an "off-the-shelf" congratulation. Above all, it refutes the theory that sport was promoted in the GDR solely to win titles and medals. No, it was about more: sport was, as Ulbricht wrote, "part of our common fight for peace and socialism."

The desire for fame was more at home elsewhere. Federal Interior Minister Werner Maihofer stated in German in 1974

Bundestag: "Whether we want it or not: sport as a top-class sport is always a competition between nations and continents. There is absolutely no way around it," said the Federal Republic of Germany minister responsible for sport. »This makes sport, especially today, one of the main things of national identification and national representation, and even a yardstick for the performance of the respective political system. Whether we want it or not, we cannot overestimate the political significance of sport. This fundamental understanding of sport in our world today is also behind it

Sports policy of this federal government.«

Ulbricht never stated that sport was a "gauge of the performance of the respective political system"; in this sense he did not attach any "state political significance" to it.

When I got married, he sent me and Renate congratulations. And it continued: "Dear Comrade Schur! In your life so far you have proven that you are a loyal son of our workers' and farmers' state. Your modest and open demeanor and your fair sporting attitude have given you unrestricted recognition in the international sporting public

Attention brought. At all times you have appeared as a representative of the new socialist Germany. You rightly became the most popular sports personality in the GDR in the last decade. That's why young people see you as their great role model. We wish you, dear Täve, and your wife with all our hearts good health and continued great success and much joy in your sporting and personal life on your journey through life together.

I also experienced Ulbricht's reluctance to exploit sport through politics during a meeting with athletes and officials

from West and East. Since the beginning of the 1950s they have come together every year for the Oberhofer Talks. These - like other discussion groups and meetings - were set up by the GDR and were intended as an attempt to effectively counter the growing

division caused by Western integration and the remilitarization of the Federal Republic. The slogan "Germans at the table!" was to accompany us in the GDR until the late 1960s.

Walter Ulbricht often took part in these rounds in Oberhof, which were characterized by the fact that everyone could say and ask what was on their mind. One time he checked with me

West German sports official asked whether I wouldn't also find a friendly reception in the Federal Republic, with which he wanted to say in a conciliatory way that the Cold War and sport had nothing to do with each other and that everything was very civilized in our field.

Yes, I can't complain, I replied - I'm usually treated very kindly in Germany too. Sometimes they were even so friendly that they offered me a place in a West German sports club and, if I didn't return to the GDR, they promised me a pretty decent progression.

Walter Ulbricht refrained from commenting and carefully changed the subject.

Günter Erbach

The largest stadium in the GDR was built in 19 months

Günter Erbach, born in 1928, 1945 agricultural worker, 1946 SED, new teacher, then studied at the University of Greifswald, 1949 to 1953 scientific aspirant at the Humboldt University in Berlin, 1953 to 1955 head of the Strausberg Central Sports School, 1956 to 1963 rector of the German University for physical culture and sport Leipzig, 1965

until 1974 Deputy State Secretary for Physical Culture and Sport, from March 1974 to 1990 State Secretary. Since 1983 President of the German Football Association of the GDR. Günter Erbach died on June 4, 2013.

You have worked in the sports science field for most of your life. Can you remember why the DHfK was founded?

The starting point was the law for the promotion of youth and sport, which was passed by the People's Chamber on February 8, 1950.

Ulbricht justified it very passionately as Deputy Prime Minister, which was probably also related to his personal experiences as a working-class athlete. This law initiated a number of measures, including the establishment of a university of physical culture and sports.

The ceremonial founding took place on October 22, 1950. This was a far-sighted and correct decision, which was soon perceived as such by the population.

Walter Ulbricht regularly visited his hometown of Leipzig. You were an aspirant at the DHfK

Founding phase. Did you meet him there?

In the summer of 1951 I experienced his first visit to the construction site. Initially he was at Friedrich-Ebert-Straße 130, where the DHfK had been temporarily housed since the fall of the previous year. The 96 students and 14 teachers welcomed him, then went to the area where construction of the sports forum and the buildings at the Elster flood basin were to begin or had already begun.

Teachers, architects, those responsible for the city council and sports officials experienced an instructive hour of operational work.

Allotment gardens were laid out in the 1940s on the area where the university complex was to be built. There was a large sand wall on the bridge next to which the striking library tower was built. We climbed it together to get an overview. Sketches of the location were brought out, the architects explained, and Walter Ulbricht listened attentively. Then suddenly some disgruntled allotment holders came complaining that they had to give up their gardens. Ulbricht walked up to her and reacted. Look, he said, you want your children too

To grow up healthy, we need scientifically trained sports teachers. We also have to think about tomorrow. – Let's do it, came the objection, that's why we grow fruit and vegetables so that we have something to eat tomorrow.

Ulbricht nodded and offered another argument for the gardens: one should not underestimate the recreational value. That would also be an important factor.

And now?

We will ensure that you are offered replacement space elsewhere, he said. – But with the same soil quality, it came

retort.

Ulbricht nodded. He wants to speak to the city council so that a common, amicable solution can be found, yes.

For those of us who were there, it was a lesson in democracy.

Barely a year after this project consultation, on May 17, 1952, Walter Ulbricht was there again and laid the foundation stone. How was it?

It was a celebratory day, everyone was aware that it was a historic date for the democratic sports movement. Around a small leveled square, in the middle of what has now been cleared

Allotment garden area, the students and teachers had gathered. Three hammer blows sounded. In simple words, Ulbricht articulated the wishes of the government and the party that sports teachers and trainers would be trained here in the future, ready and able to



educate the rising generations to be physically healthy, resilient and courageous people. "Remember," he urged us, "to teach and learn well and diligently, and become convinced patriots for a new democratic Germany!"

The history of the German sports movement - by gymnastics father Jahn

to the present – is very multifaceted. What was special about this university?

With the founding of the DHfK, a new leaf was opened in the history of German sports science. The result was a center for the training and education of sports teachers and trainers, but at the same time a site for sports science research. The establishment of the DHfK was an impressive documentation of the promotion of physical culture and sport by the state of workers and farmers, a visible proof of the high esteem and place that sport has in the socialist society

social order had.

Overall, tens of thousands of students completed the various training courses. There was a successful teaching staff who taught in modern halls, institutes and offices and conducted research in laboratories. Training took place in the sports facilities of the spacious sports forum and the basis for high sporting performance was laid. The DHfK had the right to award doctorates and maintained relationships with sports scientists from more than forty countries. The close connection was particularly important for the development of the university

to life, to the diverse tasks that had to be solved directly in the practice of socialist physical culture. The activity of the German The Gymnastics and Sports Association and its sports associations were closely linked to the work of the university. A large number of the sports teachers, trainers and officials of the DTSB had passed through it. Even if the university's contribution to the world top and top performances achieved by GDR athletes could not be specifically measured in detail, there is no question that it was large. From your statements I conclude that Walter Ulbricht paid particular attention to the development of the DHfK

dedicated.

That was obvious. He regularly checked whether and how things were progressing. Nowadays everything is declared a matter for the boss without any consequences. Ulbricht had by no means declared the DHfK to be a top priority, but he treated it as such. In the early days he stopped by at least once a year. On April 15, 1953, he was there again and discussed with faculty and students for almost four hours. This was followed by further consultation about the construction plans. As always, there was a lively discussion of his thoughts. Walter Ulbricht explained every time

very convincingly the inner connection between sport and socialist society. He was concerned with the development of healthy, educated, strong-willed and purposeful people, to which the school should play its part.

He offered a new kind of lecture for teachers and students, a conversation about the importance of science in the development of physical culture and sports. Science and sport, politics and sport must form a unity and also become a whole in the practice of our work.

»We used to play football here as boys and in the winter

Ice hockey, we skated on the Elster and everything without instructions," he recalled of his Leipzig past. »An old gymnastics teacher guided us in the gymnastics lessons. Now, equipped with good scientific knowledge, you should become physical education teachers in our new state. This is how the situation has changed in our time. We need scientific penetration of physical culture in order to set a good example for the whole of Germany in sport as well." Subsequently, the coaching faculty was created and distance learning for physical education was introduced, incidentally for the first time in the world

German sports history. Scientific conferences on theoretical problems of physical culture and sport and stimulating textbooks followed.

In January 1954, Ulbricht visited the university again. In the meantime, relationships have already been established with foreign institutions and their experiences have been evaluated and enriched with our own contributions. Walter Ulbricht supported this development with all his heart and was happy with us about the first successes. He repeatedly demanded that we pay attention to the quality of scientific training and education

should direct research.

Were there any particular topics that aroused his interest during those years?

Yes. He was fascinated by biomechanics. In the run-up to the Second German Gymnastics and Sports Festival in 1956, we organized an exhibition about it. There was a politically and technically very interesting debate in which, alongside Walter Ulbricht, Alfred Neumann in particular took part. The Berliner

"Ali" Neumann, a former "Fichte" athlete and sports teacher in exile in the Soviet Union, was also interested in our research.

Such support helped, in a few

years to create a fully developed scientific teaching and research facility. The well-known British journalist Sefton Delmer (1904-1979) wrote appreciatively in the guest book: "I long for the day when such a university is built in Great Britain. She is an example for all of us.«

The Leipzig Central Stadium was built in the mid-1950s and was the largest sports facility in the GDR at the time. Who had the idea, including Ulbricht?

No. The idea came from the Weimar Republic period and was developed by

a number of working-class athletes in Leipzig were once again brought into conversation when it was decided that there would be a second German Gymnastics and Sports Festival in August 1956. The first took place on a festival lawn in 1954.

Less than 18 months passed from planning to the inauguration of this 100,000-capacity stadium. Now a stadium is not an airfield, but given the technology available at the time, it was still a fantastic achievement for everyone involved. In February 1955 the plans were presented to the Politburo and the Council of Ministers for discussion and decision.

As expected, Ulbricht in particular supported the bold proposals by removing formal and bureaucratic obstacles.

Convinced of the people of Leipzig's will to develop and their enthusiasm for sports, he also focused on the population's voluntary cooperation within the framework of the national development project.

A few months after the decision, he visited the huge construction site for the first time in July 1955. Around 2,000 to 2,500 people worked there every day, the concrete mixers ran around the clock, trucks and dumpers moved masses of earth and gravel, excavators and bulldozers ate into the ground. As usual

He held intensive discussions on the construction site with workers, volunteers, architects and engineers.

It is said that he repeatedly appeared at the construction site unannounced.

That's correct. Whenever he had to do other things in the city, he always checked for himself how the work was progressing.

The final blow of the hammer occurred in the early morning hours of August 4, 1956.

That was close, yes. In the morning - with the active participation of all DHfK employees and students -

the last rehearsals take place. The premiere of the sports show in the afternoon was the highlight of the Second German Gymnastics and Sports Festival.

To mark the 10th anniversary of the founding of the DHfK, there was a week of celebrations at which Walter Ulbricht was also present.

What memories do you have of this event? You were now rector of the university.

Days before, and especially on the morning of October 22, 1960, we were all full of anticipation. The anniversary celebration week offered an impressive balance. Guests from thirteen countries, including African nation states, and representatives of the

World Council on Physical Education and Sport appeared. Colleagues from friendly socialist countries also took part in the conference.

Walter Ulbricht came, although he had a bad cold. Behind him lay an extensive, strenuous journey through the southern districts of our republic with many appointments. He had caught such a cold that it was visibly difficult for him to speak. Nevertheless, he stayed at the university for a whole day and did not compromise on the program. He had agreed and kept his promise, although everyone would have understood if he had gone to bed where he belonged. On

At the ceremony he emphasized: "The demands on the university will grow, and what was good yesterday may no longer be sufficient tomorrow. Let the better always be the enemy of the good."

Gerhard Mendl

I swam with Ulbricht in front of Warnemünde

Gerhard Mendl, born in 1928, apprenticed as a machine fitter after attending primary school from 1943 to 1946, member of the FDJ in 1946, of the SED in 1947, from 1947 to 1971 in voluntary or full-time FDJ functions.

1953/54 attended the Komsomol University and from 1971 to 1974 the CPSU Party University in Moscow. From 1954 to 1960 in Rostock

1. Secretary of the district leadership of the FDJ. Afterwards, until 1971, chairman of the GDR Committee for Tourism and Hiking. From 1974 to 1989 various functions of the SED in the Erfurt district. Currently chairman of a grassroots organization of the party "The Left" in Erfurt.

It was around 11 a.m. on a sunny Saturday in July. The Baltic Sea, known for its short, treacherous waves, appeared calm, as if it were sleeping. The Baltic Sea Week was already coming to an end. The district leadership of the SED, the district council, the leaders of the other democratic ones

Parties, the mayor and citizens who had made outstanding contributions to the socialist development of the Baltic Sea district stood in the reception hall of the "Stoltera" hotel in Rostock-Warnemünde and waited.

They were waiting for the first man of the state and the party to come to the coast every July since 1958, when Baltic Sea Week was first celebrated.

The cars drove up and the greeting was in a joyful mood and optimistic anticipation. What would WU say?

He wanted to swim in the Baltic Sea, which was just a few meters away

be accompanied by the hosts.

An awkward silence spread throughout the room; no one was prepared for this, no one had a bathing suit with them.

Karl Mewis, first secretary of the district management, decided as usual: briefly and succinctly and without consultation:

»Our youth secretary represents all of us. He's the youngest and the most resilient." He pointed at me.

There was no point in contradicting myself here, I was aware of that.

Ulbricht reacted calmly: "All right, let's do it like this!"

On the way to the beach he asked me questions. He wanted to know what they were

Youth in the district do this, whether there are initiatives from the FDJ district organization and the like. I informed about the progress of the Baltic Sea Week and the camp for the youth of the Baltic Sea countries and Iceland.

Ulbricht was also interested in the progress of construction work at the Rostock overseas port. In the future, not only ships with 3,000 GRT, but also 10,000-ton vessels should be unloaded in this deep-sea port.

In just a few months, 3.5 million marks were donated by the population of the GDR to expand the harbor pier, especially from members of the Free German Youth and the

donated to pioneers of the pioneer organization "Ernst Thälmann" and above all: stones collected.

We got into the water, the bodyguards stayed behind on the bank. They probably didn't have any swimming trunks with them either.

When we were out of earshot, he called to me: "Come on, let's swim!"

After about 100 meters I ran out of breath. Ulbricht swam away from me. I had lost.

The following day, Junge Welt wrote: "Walter Ulbricht beats FDJ secretary in swimming competition in the Baltic Sea!"

Well, there were worse things.

## Landscaping

Erich Postler

How Ulbricht saved me as an individual farmer at the FDJ parliament

Erich Postler, born in 1940, state-certified farmer, 1962 LPG

"Komsomol" in Fürstenwerder, then secretary for rural youth and 1.

Secretary of the FDJ district leadership in Schwerin, Moscow Komsomol University, 1969 secretary for rural youth, from 1976 2nd secretary of the Central Council

the FDJ, from 1981 to 1989 2nd secretary of the SED district leadership in Schwerin,

Member of the SED Central Committee from 1976 to 1989. In November/December 1989 in Gera, first secretary of the SED district leadership, returned to Mecklenburg and worked in the VEG Banzkow. From 1995 onwards, volunteered in the Solidarity Committee for the Victims of Political Persecution in Germany.

My most important and very personal encounter with Walter Ulbricht is quickly recounted. Reporting their impact on my CV would take much more time.

When I was 17, the members of the FDJ in my home village in Thuringia wanted me to be a secretary

should be the chairman of their newly formed basic organization (then still a basic unit). The trust really surprised and amazed me. I had never faced such a decision before. It flattered me for a few seconds, but then I saw unfamiliar tasks coming my way and resisted violently.

But it didn't help. My friends trusted me more than I did myself, and Erika Richter, the Greiz district chairwoman, promised guidance and help. The members – all young people my age – vowed to be active and support me. So: it's not that bad, you will

already do it!

Inspired by ten-grade and vocational school, I was generally and with some reservations fond of the politics of the GDR. In any case, I wasn't opposed to her. My foster parents' house gave me no reason to do the latter. Erich Reinhold, my foster father, was a respected farmer on his farm. He couldn't harm a fly and had a hard time saying "no." That was probably also an important reason why he was a non-party member of the local council, the local committee of the National Front of Democratic Germany, and the local board of the

Mutual Farmers Aid (VdGB-BHG) did voluntary work for many years. Talking wasn't his strong point. We were able to work together in silence for a whole day. But people appreciated his straightforwardness and his community spirit. This made it easier for me to get the time I needed for my new job despite the long working days on the farm - which covered ten hectares.

I suspect that my election as village secretary of the FDJ was received with mixed feelings in my parents' house: a little pride that the boy was believed to be capable of it, and a little

Fear that he might be absent too often in the field and in the stable. The latter was of course not unfounded.

To my surprise, the FDJ work in the village went better than I had feared. The instructions from the district were not missing. If you wanted, you could make something out of it. The interest of some of the village youth (the farm children largely stayed away) in spending their free time together formed the basis for a very diverse youth life, which the village population followed with a certain curiosity. We provided information about ourselves in the showcase and congratulated the villagers on their achievements

Holidays, and the fact that a Christmas tree shone in the center of the village for the first time, we were grateful for. The mayor, who was happy to finally be free of the criticism of not having an FDJ group in town, willingly rented us a youth room, which we set up according to our own wishes and with our own efforts, of course with funding from the municipality. Others also benefited from this, such as the women with their DFD group<sup>1</sup>, the volunteer fire department and also the community council, which had an additional room for consultation hours and other things. Our meetings, working groups

and events were public, and so there were often many more young people taking part than our group had members. It was not a triumphal procession, especially since the group of 17 FDJ members hardly expanded, but we benefited ourselves and others. It wasn't big politics that attracted us, but rather the immediate interests of young people that we took up. Of course, our actions did not go unnoticed, and so Reinsdorf sometimes appeared on the Volkswacht district website. In the spring of 1959 I was allowed to sit in a presidium for the first time

at the FDJ district delegate conference. In the discussion I reported on my friends' activities and our experiences. With my innate desire for completeness, I listed everything we did and how we accomplished it. Other village groups apparently found it difficult to keep up. That surprised me a lot because we had just started, while others had existed much longer. This is how fate took its course. I received recognition that, as I felt, far exceeded my achievements and ended up on the list of candidates for

the Presidium of the VI. Parliament of the FDJ, which took place in Rostock from May 12th to 15th, 1959. In the minutes I was listed as "Erich Postler, FDJ group leader and individual farmer in the Gera district."<sup>2</sup> Of course that wasn't correct, because I was still an apprentice on my parents' farm and had always stated this. But I never got rid of the individual farmer and at some point I gave up denying it. As I soon realized, it wasn't about my specific social status, but rather about the fact that I was a young person from private agriculture, including the FDJ

had little influence at the time. My friends from the Gera district management, who asked me to speak at the parliament, wanted the delegates to hear an authentic opinion - from a professional perspective, so to speak - on a very current topic: the transformation of agriculture, the transition to cooperative economics. It may well be that we had different ideas about the outcome, but they actually provided the facts for some of my arguments. So inspired, I made my request to speak and set about formulating it. I wrote in the evenings and

at night after the deliberations in private quarters for delegates in Warnemünde, which I shared with Heinz Przibylla, a member of the SDAG Wismut and hero of the work. Luckily, it wasn't my turn on the first day of consultation, but only on the third. I wouldn't have had a line. Nobody had seen my speech before, nobody wanted to see it. I only read the critical passages to my friend Heinz. He encouraged me, and so I went into the new consultation day sufficiently excited, but without suspicion, and went to the microphone that morning. I had never spoken in front of so many people, nor had I ever been

so far away from my village. Looking back, I am always amazed at my courage back then. A disaster. The room grumbled and was largely outraged; my supporters were disappointed and even horrified. I can only attribute the fact that I read the manuscript to the last line to my firm conviction in the correctness of my opinion. What happened?

It started with me criticizing a passage in the speech of the first secretary of the Central Council, Karl Namokel, who considered scythe training to be no longer up to date, which I couldn't understand. I put

It was absolutely clear that the FDJ had little influence among individual farmers and I complained that I was being used as a model farmer.

I found it unfair that there were five FDJ members from LPG and VEG on the parliamentary presidium, but I was the only one who came from private agriculture.

When people talk about rural youth, I criticized, the young individual farmers go unnoticed. I then tried to convey what goes on in the minds of individual farmers and their children when they think about joining a cooperative and gave a warning

excessive expectations. I demanded patience and solid arguments, especially good cooperatives with high incomes. When I read this speech today, it reminds me of my own inner conflict and a certain helplessness. Essentially, I was fond of the new, socialism, especially in the countryside. I had my difficulties getting there. Lots of questions and too few answers. So the disagreement between me and a large portion of the delegates was inevitable. For them, moving forward meant putting solutions and actions on the table! But I had more problems back then.

It is probably one of the lucky marks on my life's journey that Walter Ulbricht sat in the hall and listened to me attentively. The next day he spoke and calmly gave my numerous opponents a convincing lesson: "You have heard the explanations of the childhood friend who still works on the farm of a private farmer. He showed how complicated it is to win over wealthy middle farmers. Some of you growled when he spoke here. But his childhood friend was right to openly discuss all these complicated questions about the development of the individual farmer

entry into the LPG. (Applause) That's easy. Such a childhood friend is supposed to convince the old owner of the farm that he should join the LPG. How can he convince him? The best way is that LPG is developed quickly in this place and the work units are so high that the farmers say: Yes, we're going into LPG.

So, we understand very well what the childhood friend said and we want to help him so that the old farmers can be won over. We have to go to the village and clarify this question on the farm.«<sup>3</sup>

On the same day I was as

Youngest elected to the Central Council of the FDJ. In the evening, the GDR government held a reception for delegates and guests of the parliament. Walter Ulbricht, who represented Otto Grotewohl in his role as First Deputy Prime Minister, was out and about debating.

At some point he also stood in front of me. He recognized me. Friendly, a little thoughtful, but very determined and confident, he said to me: "The socialist transformation of agriculture is a difficult task. It'll take time, but I think we'll get there."

My life would probably be too

without Ulbricht's rescue it would become political. But it remains to be seen whether I would have lived so confidently without this lesson in socialist democracy and trusting debate.

1 Democratic Women's Association of Germany

2 see: VI. Parliament of the FDJ, Rostock May 12-15, 1959, Junge Welt publishing house, Berlin 1959, p. 16

3 loc. cit., p. 361

Margarete Müller

He wanted practical people in the Politburo. I was young, qualified, female and ran a cooperative

Margarete Müller, born in 1931, worked in a gardening center after attending elementary school, worked as a tractor operator at a machine rental station (MAS) from 1948 to 1950 and did an apprenticeship at the Gustavshof experimental farm, then studied at the agricultural college in Demmin. 1951 Joined the SED. From 1953 to 1958

Studied at the Agricultural Institute in Leningrad, then became an agronomist at the LPG Brohm and since January 26, 1960, chairwoman of the LPG Kotelow. From 1973 to 1976 head of the cooperative plant production department and later of the LPG plant production in Kotelow, then of the Friedland Agricultural-Industrial Association. From 1963 to 1989 member of the SED Central Committee and candidate for the Politburo, member of the People's Chamber, and since 1971 also a member of the State Council.

At the

January 26, 1990 Exclusion from the SED-PDS. Margarete Müller lives alone in Kotelow, a small village

Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania.

Margarete, how is your health?

Oh, quite good. I just get slower and slower when I walk.

You have to do gymnastics. Egon, I have four thousand square meters of garden alone

farm, I have enough gymnastics.

Is there no help?

The neighbor boy is helping at the moment. There is only the agricultural cooperative left in town. Back then, we employed our people in the winter

there was enough work in the workshop. Today the technology is so complicated that this is no longer possible. And in order to save personnel costs, the farmers are sent into unemployment from November to March. We started here with a small cooperative of 800 hectares. Then it became a cooperation and finally an agricultural-industrial association. And now there is the agricultural cooperative, which farms and raises livestock and has to pay attention to money.

And did you survive the "reversal" well?

If you mean, was there any trouble? No. A 15-year-old once had one

Beer bottle thrown through the window, but it wasn't politically motivated, he was drunk. And someone in the hunting group complained, but since I was nearing retirement, I was planning on ending my membership anyway. No, there was no trouble. When Kotelow recently celebrated his 625th anniversary, I was even asked to give the celebratory speech.

Until 1989, our former manor house housed the village restaurant, the consumer shop and our very well-attended consultation center. Then the house was empty. A West German couple has this, probably for an apple and an egg

Baroque building including seven hectares of land and forest was acquired and turned into a hotel. It all looks very nice now, and I don't deny that a lot of effort and money was invested there. But of course it hurt when we were able to read in glossy magazines at the opening in 2007 under the heading "Living in the landlord style":

"Kotelow hunting lodge: built in 1733, neglected during the GDR era, now lovingly restored." And: "Lamps from Lebanon, furniture from Denmark, a stone terrace staircase from Berlin..." Of course we didn't have any of that. But it was our castle, not one

Designer hostel for "landlords" from the West. And we kept it okay.

Have you ever been there in the meantime?

No. The owner once met me on the street and asked whether I was "Mrs. Müller." Yes, I said, he's welcome to come to me for coffee sometime, I live in front not far from the church. He hasn't done it yet to this day.

And you spoke on the anniversary?

The whole village came, almost 300 people. I have lived in Kotelow since January 26, 1960, I began. That was my first time, at 29

years, was elected LPG chairwoman. And I reported what it was like when we started. There were no paved roads and boots got stuck in the deep mud. And then help came: from the NVA, from the Soviet Army, even from the State Security, who first paved the paths with their technology.

Little by little we have made this village, let's say calm, civilized and advanced. We were happy together about every new house, every new stable, every new barn, about the dairy farm and the pigsties that we built together. We have together

celebrated and also got annoyed together when things didn't go the way we wanted. We were a community. And even in the summer, farmers were able to go on vacation, and the children qualified at universities and technical schools and sometimes came back because they saw a perspective for themselves and their family in little Kotelow. – That's how I spoke. What kind of applause do you think I got?

Only the fire department boys criticized me afterwards. »Mrs Müller, you mentioned everything. You just forgot about our volunteer fire department. That's right. It really did for me

sorrow.

The castle owner and his wife, a doctor, also came to me and said, almost pitifully, that they had no idea how difficult it had been for us. No, I said, it really wasn't an easy start. But we had a goal in mind and that gave us strength. – I don't know if you understood that.

When they celebrate the Angerfest today, a bouncy castle is inflated for the half dozen children who still live in the village and the children are given make-up, there is loud music and the old people drink their beer out of plastic cups. Oh, Margarete, say

She then, at least we could celebrate properly before. The pub in the neighboring village has also closed, people are leaving, I mean one in four now. A block of flats that we had built back then has already been demolished.

The one neighbor who used to always travel west to work has given up his job. Gasoline, rent and living expenses there cost as much as he earned. It's really not worth it. He would rather stay at home and take care of the house and garden.

"If you ever have something to do, Ms. Müller, I'll be happy to help." Having to watch something like that is bitter.

Tell me something about your family.

We lived in a village 15 kilometers from here. We were four siblings, now there is only one sister left.

My brother Manfred played for ASK Vorwärts in the top football league. He worked as a trainer in Neubrandenburg until the 90s.

Then he went to the hospital on a Wednesday and by Sunday he was dead. At 68. Never drank, never smoked, always lived healthy.

Your biography after elementary school is purely East German, it is accompanied by typical GDR terms: tractor operator, agronomist, MAS (for machine rental station), MTS,

LPG, Cooperative Department, Agro-Industrial Association. At the same time, they document stages of development in GDR agriculture. Can you say something about that?

The machine rental stations were, in short, the help of the working class for agriculture; their predecessor was the VdgB1 machine yards. They were based on an order from the SMAD. The machines concentrated there were intended to help new farmers as well as small and medium-sized farmers. With the establishment of agricultural production cooperatives

from it machine-tractor stations, MTS. The machines and tractors were state-owned and did not become the property of the cooperative, the MTS remained legally independent companies, and the employees - me as a tractor driver - were employed. We saw ourselves as a base or bridgehead for the working class in the countryside. At the beginning of the 1960s, when we were fully cooperative, the machines were transferred to the ownership of the cooperatives and in 1964 the MTS became district companies for agricultural technology (KfL), which maintained and repaired the machines.

My MAS director always said yes

us: Girls, girls, learn something. You're going to have to close up shop at some point! But what should we learn? We lived in the village, were resettlers from Upper Silesia, had nothing, not even plans. We came from the city. Father had worked on the town estate there, but he was not a farmer. When my mother asked me back then: Girl, what do you want to be when you grow up?, I answered: anything, just nothing in agriculture. But when we landed in Western Pomerania in 1945, we had no choice, including me, but to go into farming. Father soon came out of captivity and went to prison

VdgB Maschinenhof as a tractor driver. And that's how I came to it too. In February 1949, the Eastern Zone received 1,000 tractors as aid from the Soviet Union.<sup>2</sup> We also received one

"Nati-Raupe" was a 50 hp tracked tractor from Kharkov. And I was allowed to drive it.

Did you apply for it or did they say: Come on, girl, now get on the box?

They had no other job for me. I had already learned to drive a tractor on the Lanz-Bulldog and was one of the first tractor drivers.

That also had to do with the FDJ campaign

"Youth on the Tractors" together,

where I attended a corresponding course in Schwerin.

Finally, I was delegated to another course in Neubrandenburg. The director of the agricultural college in Demmin was also there. He said I had to get a proper education. He convinced me. So I was in Demmin for a year and in Güstrow for two years. After graduating from technical school, I became an agronomist<sup>3</sup>. But as soon as they were finished, they started looking for some to study in the Soviet Union. We were seven Germans who came to Leningrad - eight years after the war! It was not easy. In the practical

During training, while plowing, soldiers with mine detectors walked in front of our tractor. My diploma thesis was about spring wheat, and I also had to plant a piece of field.

At the institute there were 25 girls in the Agrofak, some of whom I still have contact with today, most of whom are no longer there. Later, when I was already LPG chairman, I invited her to my place. They then visited us in Kotelow for three or four weeks and looked at agriculture in the GDR.

Natascha, who survived the Leningrad blockade, died in 2012. As

When I brought her to the train station after her first visit, she hugged me and said she was happy to meet normal Germans in Germany. I guessed what she wanted to say. The trauma of the siege tormented all Leningraders and determined the image of "the Germans."

Oh, but I noticed that my knowledge of Russian was declining. I was happy when the first Russian-German emigrants came to the village and I hoped to be able to activate the language again. But they only wanted to speak German in order to integrate quickly. I understood that.

Now one of their families still lives in Kotelow. We now speak Russian to each other more often. They tell me: If they had known what awaited them here, they would have preferred to stay at home, in Russia.

You were the only German in your class in Leningrad back then?

Yes, the six others had different training courses.

And then you returned to the GDR in 1958. Where did you end up?

I was delegated to the MTS there at LPG Friedrichshof. Friedrichshof was a small town, but the first fully cooperative village in the district

Neubrandenburg. Max Steffen<sup>4</sup> and a group from the Bolshoi from Moscow, who were currently performing in Neubrandenburg, came to the harvest festival.

Dancers from the world-famous dance theater here in this tiny village that can hardly be found on the map?

That's the way it is. The interpreter was so excited and asked me to help, as I had just come from Leningrad and could certainly deal with Russians. I was embarrassed. Back then, rural women, including me, rarely wore trousers. I ran across the stubble fields in my skirt and as a result my calves were completely scratched. And that too

the ballet dancers' flawless legs

... Even the farmers standing down in front of the stage noticed the difference. It was still a wonderful celebration.

Then the LPG chairman from Kotelow went to Meißen and I was oppressed until I agreed to take over his position. Of course only for a limited time, as I was told. As a tractor driver I earned around 600 marks back then, as LPG chairman I got half that...

You became politically active quite quickly, joining the Neubrandenburg district leadership of the SED, the district agricultural council... There

It was probably only a matter of time that you met Walter Ulbricht. When did you first meet him?

That was in the fall of 1960. Max Steffen<sup>4</sup> and a number of the district leadership, including me, were summoned to the Politburo in Berlin, and there it was announced to us that Steffen would be replaced. After a short interregnum, "Schorsch" Ewald<sup>5</sup> was

supposed to take over this function. Unlike Steffen, he came from agriculture and was supposed to develop the agricultural district more successfully than his predecessor.

When he left Rügen, that was a

big loss for us: Schorsch Ewald was the first district secretary of the SED on Rügen when I became an FDJ official there. I learned a lot from him, he was a great guy. – What impression did you have of Ulbricht back then?

I was a little country girl. I was surprised and fascinated at the same time because this great man - after all, he was the first in the party and state - behaved completely normally and without any distance from us. In 1963 I was delegated to the party conference, where I also sat on the executive committee. I was asked to report to a certain room, which I did

also did. Schorsch Ewald was already waiting there. "Margarete, you too?" he said in surprise, the question indicating that he knew what was in store for us. Finally Walter Ulbricht came and said that they were of the opinion that I should become the Politburo candidate. I defended myself and explained that I couldn't talk. – But I know how to talk to the farmers, said Ulbricht, that would be much more important than making any speeches.

Did he talk about what exactly would happen to you in the Politburo? I mean, you were 32 years old and probably barely with the innards

trusted by the political leadership.

No, he didn't talk to me about that. I was, as they say, thrown in at the deep end.

But you also let yourself be thrown, your resistance was not only moderate, but also, you will admit, argumentatively unconvincing. I was already familiar with the term "party discipline" back then. On the other hand, and I completely understood this, Ulbricht wanted practical people from agriculture in the leadership, i.e. people who literally knew their way around this field. I was also young and a woman, and there was a noticeable lack of leadership among the latter. take

the front page of the New Germany with the heads of the Politburo members of the VI. Party conference voted: I'm the only woman there! And as far as age is concerned: Ulbricht systematically brought in young people. He didn't want a generational change, but rather a continuous renewal of the management staff. This also showed his strategic thinking.

Also: As a candidate you weren't so intensively involved in political work in Berlin, so I was able to continue working in the LPG in Kotelow.

But that didn't play a role in the Politburo meetings. There was no distinction between candidate and full member

differentiated. At most when voting. And voting in the Politburo was extremely rare, at least in my time. I can only remember three votes in the twelve years I was a member of this committee. As a rule, unanimity was achieved. Or was it different under Ulbricht? No.

And was it discussed?

Yes very. At first Otto Grotewohl<sup>6</sup> sat with him in the front. And there was a lively debate. After Otto's death, Walter sat alone in the front for a long time.

At some point Erich Honecker moved to his side, he was already in charge

Secretariat meetings.

Could Walter Ulbricht also be rude?

I can't remember that.

Was there friction between the older and younger comrades in the Politburo at that time? The old people had different life experiences, were in exile or in Nazi prison and therefore couldn't study - but you had studied and were more professionally qualified than many others.

I didn't feel anything like that. On the contrary. I had the feeling that the older ones were looking out for the younger ones, helping them. Hermann Axen<sup>7</sup>

For example, always sought conversation and asked if I needed support.

Did Ulbricht ever ask you to speak to the discussion?

No never. He knew my inhibitions. It was up to me whether I reported it or not. Ulbricht never coerced me.

With you came on the VI. At the party conference, another agricultural expert was appointed to the Politburo: Karl-Heinz Bartsch<sup>8</sup>. He only stayed in this committee for a few days and was removed from the SED on March 28, 1963 at the request of the Central Party Control Commission

excluded. He had concealed his membership in the Waffen-SS. Was this discussed in the Politburo?

What else is there to discuss? He volunteered for the Waffen SS in April 1941, was in France and the Soviet Union, fought in the Kursk Salient in 1943 and as an SS Unterscharführer in the 17th SS Panzergrenadier Division "Götz von Berlichingen" on the Western Front since 1944 . At

He wasn't involved in Nazi or war crimes, but he didn't tell anyone that he had worn the black uniform of this criminal organization



voluntarily. Others had also worn them - but no one in the leadership of the thoroughly anti-fascist SED. The real political scandal, I felt, was the breach of trust. He had not been honest with his comrades. And for that he was removed from office.

You knew him personally?

Yes, he ran the bull breeding station in Woldegk from 1965 until the 80s and was LPG chairman until he reached retirement age. He would occasionally call me and offer help if I needed it. He was doing his job

orderly.

Do you have a driving license?

No never. I was picked up and brought back to the meetings in Berlin by car. The car, driver and companion were stationed in Neubrandenburg. They delivered the official mail on Saturday, then I was alone. I swept the street in front of my property alone like everyone else in the village and mowed the lawn.

Once, when Lusya was visiting from Moscow, I hurried so that we could have more time for each other. I cut my big toe with the lawnmower. That had to be stitched. Then I lay there

two or three days in the hospital. Afterwards, the security guard had to mow my lawn. They probably got in trouble because of my accident.

But I still took care of everything else on my own: the small livestock, the garden. My father and my brothers-in-law helped me, no one else.

You still had chickens when you were a Politburo candidate?

Yes. Around fifty pieces. There was a nice story there. I told Frieda Sternberg<sup>9</sup> – the first LPG chairwoman of the GDR and Central Committee member – that I needed a rooster. She brought me one from her LPG in the Leipzig district to the Central Committee meeting. We stood in front of the

ZK building, and she got the rooster out of the car: "Look, what a pretty animal," she said, stroking its feathers admiringly, and then I loaded it into my Volvo.

My chickens gave him a lot of trouble. When I came back from vacation, the driver in Schönefeld greeted me with a look of suffering: Comrade Müller, something bad has happened.

I expected everything except the news: The rooster is dead. It hadn't survived the stress.

What did you do with the chicken eggs?

I delivered them like everyone else, and there was grain in return. After the turn"

that was done. I had to eat the eggs myself.

If I understood correctly, weren't there security guards around you all the time here in Kotelow?

In Kotelow the farmers looked after me.

For eight years, from 1963 to 1971, you met Walter Ulbricht at least once every week, namely at the Politburo meeting. And you are together at protocol events, farmers' congresses, visits to agra in Markkleeberg and in farms, etc.

occurred. Was he ever in Kotelow?

No.

How did he affect you?

Fatherly and somehow very staid.

Was it due to age, character or function?

I think that was his nature.

Did you also have contact with Lotte Ulbricht?

Yes. I remember a women's congress in Klink. Days before, Erika Jahnke from the women's commission came to Kotelow. At that time there was no permanent street in the village. So she got out and her pumps got stuck in the mud. It has to

they probably told Lotte. Because in Klink, a few women from my village accompanied me, Lotte was surprised that we were wearing such stylish and clean shoes. How's that? Oh, I said, we have our rubber boots in the car. And that wasn't a lie.

Willi Stoph also came once. The same mishap happened to him. After that we got a solid road. However, we didn't get it as a gift; it was integrated into the village development plan and into our budget. After

After the turnaround, we will have a new, stylish street with funding

get – without sidewalk.

That means: The village itself paid for the road back then.

You could say so.

I am therefore asking to clarify whether the community has benefited from your political office.

Definitely no. We would have achieved what we achieved with the cooperative even without my position in Berlin. I was as unprivileged as the village. I would like to give you an example of the modest possibilities of a Politburo member or candidate.

You have probably seen the empty gatehouse at the entrance to the village. The cobbled village street used to go through it, but now the asphalt road curves around it. Back then, the LPG wagons repeatedly got stuck there, and once a drawbar even broke through the masonry when the horses went through: And behind the wall was the child's bed... Demolition seemed to be the best of all solutions. I offered it to the Agricultural Museum in Alt-Schwerin as the last gatehouse in Mecklenburg; my colleagues there had already demolished an old farmhouse and put it in Open-air museum rebuilt. But

they waved me off. Once when an NVA tank was traveling nearby, I went and offered the driver a thousand marks if he happened to be with his... The soldier just shook his head and said: Comrade Müller, I won't do that. The building is a listed building. The gatehouse has been rotting for years now and is for sale. The Association of Mutual Farmers' Aid (VdGB) was founded in autumn 1945 with the commissions for land reform. In November 1950, this became the Association of Mutual Farmer Aid/Farmer Trade Cooperatives (VdGB/BHG). She was in favor of the acceptance of agricultural products and the allocation

of seeds, fertilizers and animal feed and provided political support for agriculture and rural development as a whole. She had her own parliamentary group in the People's Chamber from 1950 to 1963 and from 1986 to 1990, and was always represented in the local parliaments as a representative of the LPG's interests. The last VdGB boss, from 1982 to 1990, was Fritz Dallmann, who ran an LPG not far from Margarete Müller's Kotelow in Priborn and sat with her in the Central Committee since 1964. A thousand tractors from the Soviet Union: To help the ailing agriculture in its zone, the Soviet Union delivered around a thousand different tractors of the Kirovets 35, Universal 2 and STS types during 1949, the latter of which were supplied by the Stalingrad Tractor Works, which were re-established after the war had been built.

Agronomist, a common name in the GDR for an agricultural engineer working in agricultural production cooperatives. Max Steffen (1909-1988), trained bricklayer, then metal worker, 1927 KPD, anti-fascist resistance fighter, Sachsenhausen concentration camp, returned to Germany in 1948 after being taken prisoner by the Soviets. 1948 SED, after attending the party college from 1953 to 1960 in Neubrandenburg, 1st secretary of the SED district leadership, member of the Central Committee from 1958 to 1963, then - until 1981 - secretary of the SED company party organization in the VEB Kraftwerk Lübbenau, later director of cadres and vocational training the VVB power plants. Georg Ewald (1926-1973), farm worker, 1946 SED, after attending the party college 1st Secretary of the SED district leadership in Bad Doberan,

then reprimands. From 1960 to 1963, first secretary of the district management in Neubrandenburg. Central Committee member, Politburo candidate and People's Chamber member since 1963. Chairman of the Agriculture Council and the Council for Agricultural Production and Food Industry at the Council of Ministers and from 1971 to 1973 Minister for Agriculture, Forestry and Food Industry in the GDR. Fatal in a car accident in 1973. Otto Grotewohl (1894-1964), printer, SPD 1912, Braunschweiger from 1920 to 1930. Member of the state parliament, 1921 Minister of Education, 1932 Minister of the Interior and Justice, 1925 to 1933 Member of the Reichstag. In June 1945 he re-established the SPD and campaigned for unification with the KPD. Together with Wilhelm Pieck, chairman of the SED. From 1949 to 1964 Prime Minister of the GDR

Hermann Axen (1916-1992), KJVD 1932, Emigrated to France in 1938, extradited to the Gestapo in 1942, Auschwitz concentration camp until 1945, then Buchenwald, SED and co-founder of the FDJ in 1946, Central Committee member from 1949, member of the People's Chamber from 1954 to 1989, editor-in-chief of Neue Deutschland from 1958 to 1966, candidate in 1963, 1970 Member of the Politburo, member of the Presidium of the Committee of Anti-Fascist Resistance Fighters since 1979 and of the General Council of the Fédération Internationale des Résistants since 1982 and member of the Presidium of the GDR Peace Council from 1982 to 1989. Karl-Heinz Bartsch (1923-2004), after training as an agricultural assistant, volunteered for the SS at the age of 18, training in the 3rd SS Panzer Division "Totenkopf", war operations in France, later on the Eastern, then on the Western Front. After being taken prisoner by the Americans at the end of 1945, he returned to Germany and began studying

from the Martin Luther University and graduated as a qualified farmer in 1949, SED in 1949, doctorate in 1951, habilitation in 1961. Head of the VEG Clausberg in 1952, member of the SED district leadership in Erfurt from 1954 to 1960. From 1961 to the beginning of 1963 director of the Institute for Animal Breeding and Domestic Animal Genetics at the Agricultural Faculty of the Humboldt University in Berlin, from 1962 to the beginning of 1963 deputy minister for agriculture, registration and forestry of the GDR, beginning of 1963 professor. On January 21, 1963, Central Committee member and Politburo candidate. On the 9th February 1963 expulsion from the Central Committee, on March 28, 1963 from the SED. From April 1963 to February 1965 worked in the VEG Großvielen in the Waren district and from 1965 to 1981 director of the VEG for animal breeding in Woldegk and head of the base of the research center for animal production there. On December 3, 1972, Bartsch made a request

to be readmitted to the SED, which was rejected by the ZPKK on March 2, 1973. From 1981 until his retirement in 1988, Bartsch was LPG chairman of a heifer rearing business. From 1988 to 1990 he worked as a teacher at the Neubrandenburg Agricultural Engineering School.

Frieda Sternberg (1920-2009), SPD in 1946, then SED, founded the LPG "Ernst Thälmann" in Bennewitz near Wurzen in August 1953 with six farm workers. She was the first woman in the GDR to run an LPG. From 1954 to 1958 and from 1963 to 1989 candidate for the Central Committee of the SED. She provided the template for characters in Helmut Sakowski's "Wege übers Land" and "Daniel Druskat."

Dietrich Steinfeldt

Why the Schwerin agricultural district should strengthen the working class

Dietrich Steinfeldt, born in 1932, born and raised in Hamburg, bombed out and moved to Mecklenburg to live with his grandparents. After graduating from high school, she studied economics, first in Rostock and then in Berlin. With a diploma, he worked for the Perleberg district council, where he was responsible for finances and was head of the council until 1965

County Plan Commission. He then moved to the district planning commission, of which he was chairman until 1975. From 1975 to 1989 Secretary for Economic Affairs of the SED Schwerin district leadership, then retired.

At the end of June 1967, Walter Ulbricht visited Schwerin to speak at a rally in the Congress Hall. There were elections to the Volkskammer on July 2nd. He came a day earlier to, as it was said, discuss current tasks and problems with the secretariat of the SED district leadership, specifically questions relating to the agricultural and food industry

as well as the construction industry.

The first secretary, his name since 1952 was Bernhard Quandt<sup>10</sup>, had a thorough report drawn up, the speakers for the discussion were named, maps and models were prepared. I had been a member of the district planning commission for some time and was able to look forward to the meeting calmly because I did not have to speak. Furthermore, with all due respect, my enthusiasm for Ulbricht was limited, for which there were certainly reasons that one can probably guess.

I also asked myself a little bit: the man was more than twice my age, what was he supposed to do?

Have something new to tell me?

I sat about three meters away from him and was able to study him as he listened intently and focused to the speeches and took notes as he did so. The Schwerin district was clearly an agricultural district; more than half of the gross product was produced by agricultural and food companies. The district only contributed 1.6 percent of the GDR's industrial production, placing it second to last among all districts. Well, someone had to march behind after all, that didn't seem too dramatic to me. However, our analyzes also showed that in

In the next ten years, baby boomers would enter the workforce; we expected an increase of around 13,000 people. On the other hand, around 4,000 jobs would disappear due to the progressive modernization of farms there. And the district was already consuming more of the national income than it produced itself, that is, even agriculture was not producing the growth that it should have. Quandt, whose heart beat for agriculture not only because of his background, believed that this would strengthen him

and the development of agricultural businesses.

At the end of the meeting, Ulbricht was asked to give the closing remarks. I expected that he would now pull out a prepared speech and announce the usual platitudes, as he did on television. But Ulbricht, contrary to expectations, acquitted himself and only looked at his notes every now and then to respond to certain statements. That was the first big surprise for me. The second was his conclusion: the working class in the district had not developed to the extent necessary, which is why

Agriculture would be left behind. In short, we would have to expand industry in the district so that agriculture could progress. This was surprising, especially since everyone at the table was of the opinion that an accelerated development of industry would weaken the main branch of production in the district, namely agriculture. That's why everything was geared towards the development of a modern agricultural district - and now Ulbricht came and demanded that industry be developed. Here, in Mecklenburg?

Even in the Council of Ministers' forecast group "Distribution of the productive forces in the GDR," of which I was a member, people saw it differently. agriculture

and livestock farming should continue to dominate the district in the future; at most, tourism - at that time we still called it recreation - should be promoted.

Ultimately, Ulbricht demanded - or as it was politically correct: he suggested - that this year, together with the State Planning Commission, ideas should be developed on the basic direction of the district's development up to 1980. And this year we need a district perspective plan up to 1970 as well as a general transport and development plan for the period up to 1980.

That's how it happened. On the 7th

In December 1967, the district management dealt with these strategy papers, then they were discussed and approved by the district council.

On this basis, for example, the Schwerin-Süd industrial complex was created in just a few years with large companies such as plastic machine construction, the hydraulic factory and the leather goods factory with several thousand employees. And of course the associated apartments. The bottom line is that the basic resources in the district's industry subsequently doubled, and between 1971 and 1989 production in mechanical and vehicle construction quadrupled

in light industry.

Three years after the course suggested by Ulbricht, I was asked to come to Berlin to speak at a meeting of the State Council. It had the cumbersome title "The further design of the system of planning and management of economic and social development, the provision and care of the population in the districts, districts, cities and communities - for the development of socialist local policy." I was supposed to talk there about the coordination of investments using the example of the Schwerin-Süd industrial complex. Quandt had

He asked me to say something about his favorite topic, agriculture, but given the very precise nature of my topic, that was simply not possible.

So in April 1970 I went to the capital for the 24th meeting of the State Council; Ulbricht gave me the floor as the second speaker in the discussion. I spoke about our experiences, Ulbricht thanked us and responded immediately; it was to be his only response to a speech that day. He underlined my assessment that the construction of the new industrial center in the south of Schwerin would be a very complicated,

because it is a very complex task, which is why the state and political leadership in Schwerin are rightly concentrating on the construction of the industrial and residential area. Everything else is secondary. In doing so, he addressed possible criticism that other problems in the district that also needed a solution were initially put aside.

In view of the development of the Schwerin district, which was carried out with Ulbricht's - well, let's just say - guidelines, one could see that this strategic orientation was completely correct. It was the final departure

a previously backward region into modernity.

Bernhardt Quandt (1903-1999),

Eisendreher, 1920 SPD, 1923 KPD, 1932 member of the Mecklenburg-Schwerin state parliament. Repeatedly imprisoned after 1933, from 1939 to 1945 in the Sachsenhausen and Dachau concentration camps. After the war, district administrator in Güstrow, since 1948 Minister of Agriculture of Mecklenburg, 1951/52 Prime Minister. From 1952 to 1974

1. Secretary of the Schwerin district leadership of the SED. Member of the Central Committee from 1958 to 1989 and of the State Council since 1960.

Gerhard Schneider

»Protects the landscape and still increases production«

Gerhard Schneider, born in 1933, relocated from East Prussia in 1945, apprenticeship in agriculture. Since 1952 service in the armed forces of the GDR. Dismissed as reserve major in 1964. Studied at the engineering school for agricultural technology in Berlin-Wartenberg. 1967 Chief Engineer, then in various positions until dissolution

Management functions at VEG Zingst. Then unemployed, now retired.

Our state-owned Zingst estate was located not far from the Baltic Sea resort of Dierhagen, where Ulbricht went on vacation in the summer. When he was on the Darss, one always had to expect surprises. Sometimes he appeared here, sometimes there. Once he stood in front of the town hall in Ribnitz and wanted to speak to the mayor. But he wasn't there, because the district council was in office in the town hall. However, Ulbricht was of the opinion that town halls should be houses in which citizens, if they sought advice, could also get it from the mayor

should. He caused the council to have to find another place to stay and the mayor to return to the town hall. Word of such popular interventions naturally spread.

It was logical that sooner or later Ulbricht would also appear in our VEG. He always decided where to go at short notice so as not to cause a stir. For example, if he had found out that the chiefs in the district capital of Rostock had arranged for a hill to be built especially for him between Born and Ahrenshoop so that he could - if necessary - have a look from there

could throw the landscape, he would certainly have been thrown out of his skin. For the same reason, a road was built on the Ostzingst over the dike to the Wadden Sea so that he could see as much of this beautiful landscape as possible. The vernacular quickly had a name for both:

"Ulbricht-Hügel" and "Ulbrichtstrasse". Ulbricht didn't learn anything from the street either. Thank God, there would have been a rumble.

At that time I was chief engineer at VEG and was part of the company's management committee. Then one day it happened. We received news that Walter and Lotte Ulbricht were coming to visit. We were just able to

organized that some employees gathered in front of the central workshop and the administration building of the VEG (today it houses the "Vier Saisonen" hotel and a supermarket) to form a guard. Suddenly a single black Tatra rolled into the yard. No police, no escort or support vehicle. The Ulbrichts got out, shook hands, talked, and the director, asked for appropriate information and guidance, showed him our catchment area. First we went to the eastern tip of the peninsula, the Pramort. "Ulbrichtstrasse" was left to the left. The director explained.

To the east it was joined by the Wadden Sea and the islands of Werder and Bock. The view extended to the islands of Hiddensee and Rügen. Our guests were overwhelmed by the beauty. The director of the VEG explained our ideas. We wanted to economically develop unused, fallow territory in order to produce even more food. The Ulbrichts listened very intently and we thought they would follow our thoughts. But Walter Ulbricht shook his head. It is true that there is still great hunger in the world that needs to be overcome, but we should

Don't destroy beautiful, unique nature, but instead ensure that capitalism, which is responsible for hunger in large parts of the world through profit-seeking and speculation, is overcome. It seems to him that it makes more sense if we also intensify food production instead of working extensively and destroying the landscape. Then we drove to the large drying plant in the Sundische Wiese and visited it while production was ongoing. As chief engineer, I explained the construction, the current reconstruction, with which we can increase production on the one hand and reduce labor and costs on the other

wanted to improve living conditions. The Chairman of the State Council found words of appreciation for this. Afterwards there was a snack with small talk with the guests from the district. Unfortunately, I wasn't able to get my suggestion to include working people as well. Harry Tisch, first secretary of the SED district leadership, had said that the Ulbrichts were on vacation and wanted peace and quiet, so everything should stay in a small group. But Tisch had made his calculations without Walter Ulbricht. As soon as he sat on the bench and looked at the tie wearers sitting around him, he asked: "Why aren't there any?"

Workers here?"

Tisch asks the director: "Why aren't there any workers here?" as if he couldn't have given himself the answer.

The operations manager turned to me with the same question.

I went over to the dryworks and fetched six women and men who were expendable. They didn't know what awaited them.

The Ulbrichts drank juice, which bothered the officials at least as much as the fact that they were logged out as conversation partners. They only reached for the vodka when the Ulbrichts drove away and the workers returned to theirs

machines had returned. Ulbricht had bought his colleagues from the drying plant a case of beer.

"But don't drink until after work," he had shouted with a laugh as he said goodbye and got into the car.

»Think about the hunger in the world and the intensification of production! You have to be sober and have a clear view.«

Johannes Chemnitzer

"Welcome, dear comrade Walter Ulbricht"

Johannes Chemnitzer, born in 1929, joined the KPD in 1945, attended the agricultural college in Zwickau, then, from 1955 to 1958, secretary for agriculture in the Zwickau district leadership of the SED and then attended the party college in Moscow. From 1958 to 1962 he was secretary for agriculture in the Gera district leadership of the SED

1961/62 Chairman of the Standing Commission for Agriculture of the Gera District Council. 1. Secretary of the SED district leadership in Neubrandenburg from 1963 to 1989 and member of the People's Chamber since 1963 (until 1989), member of the Central Committee from 1967 to 1989, candidate of the Politburo and Central Committee Secretary in November 1989 Expelled from the SED in December.

As a commercial apprentice, I received a uniform in March 1945, but I quickly returned it at the suggestion of a farmer and because of the fear he had that I would end up as an American prisoner of war

went out to work with him on the farm, at least for a short time. Then I returned home and father returned from captivity. The American occupation was followed by the Red Army in late summer. In Wildenfels, a small town southeast of Zwickau, the same changes and upheavals took place as everywhere in the Soviet occupation zone. The local count was expropriated, his fields became land reform land, and my father was given a new farm position. I became a farm worker there. In the period that followed, I experienced the sometimes tough conflicts

in the countryside. It was about target, "free peaks", prices, allocations, state purchases, missing seeds, Fertilizers, spare parts and much more. The existing contradictions and different interests became apparent in the farmers' meetings. The strong farmers spoke up and refused to fulfill their desires. They made no secret of the fact that they viewed

developments under the new political conditions at least critically, if not outright rejected them. After such heated debates, I often drove home dissatisfied, not to say annoyed.

After visiting the

After graduating from the party college, I became the agricultural secretary in the Gera district management. The fifth party conference of the SED was aimed at completing the socialist transformation in the countryside. The First Secretary clearly applied pressure. Also in Gera. Developments there were lagging quite behind. There was harsh criticism and a commission that investigated the causes. In the end, the first secretary of the district management was replaced and Paul Roscher, an experienced agricultural politician, took his place.

There were also changes in Berlin. At the 7th session of the Central Committee in the winter of 1959, Gerhard

Grüneberg replaced the Central Committee Secretary Erich Mückenberger, who was previously responsible for agriculture. In the period that followed, there were repeated consultations between those responsible for agricultural policy. I have fond memories of a meeting with Ulbricht at the beginning of 1960, when he vowed to get all farmers in the country to join the agricultural production cooperatives. We should go for one Provide an "atmosphere of socialist transformation". All farmers should take the step from "I" to "We" because it would benefit the republic, but also every single farmer.

The city and the countryside should go hand in hand and mobilize democratic parties and mass organizations.

In Gera, on the initiative of the district management, the Standing Commission for Agriculture of the district council developed a plan for the development of the livestock industry. She was supported by the Agricultural Faculty of the Friedrich Schiller University in Jena. The formation of cooperatives progressed. 1963, the year of VI. At the SED party conference, our district was fully cooperative.

They were obviously happy with my work. In November 1962

the Council of Ministers decided to appoint me as deputy head of the Standing Commission for Agriculture in the CMEA. And the Politburo was of the opinion that I should head the party organization in the Neubrandenburg agricultural district. On February 17, 1963, I was elected first secretary of the district administration.

From then on I had to deal with Walter Ulbricht on a regular basis.

Many cooperatives in the territory were underperforming and lacked qualified, experienced cadres.

Things weren't looking good, especially in the Uckermark. Walter Ulbricht demanded:

"Industrial workers to the north!" Dem

Many followed the call.

On April 20, 1963, a "Letter from the Central Committee to the working people of socialist agriculture" signed by Ulbricht appeared on a full page in the New Germany, which was about the realization of the party conference's demand that the population "be better equipped with food and the industry with raw materials to supply our own production". Under the subheading "Food and more food" it said:

»High feed production is the prerequisite for high production of meat, milk and eggs. For this reason

Care should be taken to ensure that more high-yield and protein-rich crops are grown instead of low-yield and low-protein crops."

Then followed a list of what was meant by this.

At that time, an article appeared in the same newspaper criticizing the backlog in spring orders in our district. Under the heading "Plowing instead of sowing oats," a journalist thought he had identified the reason for our backlog. This led to Walter Ulbricht immediately picking up the phone and calling me. However, I wasn't in the office;

district on the way. So Hans Gerlach, the second secretary of the district management, took the brunt of the whole thing on my behalf. It was really quite silly that the traditional plowing competition had to be used for the plan residues; the provision was not only unfair, but was also based on ignorance. But it was enough to make me feel doubly guilty: firstly, because we were actually behind on the spring orders, and secondly, because my boss couldn't get me on the phone. Something like that never leaves a good impression.

In the period that followed, he looked repeatedly

Agriculture Minister Hans Reichelt past. We visited cooperatives together and asked whether and how support should be provided. However, we also heard a lot of unobjective criticism, which made it clear that there were still a number of forces in the villages who were hindering, if not disrupting, the work of the cooperatives.

And the cooperative farmers should also be more closely involved in development. At the end of November 1963, farmers from all parts of the Neubrandenburg district gathered

in the holiday village of Klink to discuss the situation with Lotte Ulbricht in her role as a member of the Women's Commission at the Politburo and with Margarete Müller, chairwoman of the LPG Kotelow and candidate for the Politburo. Hans Beiser, head of the

district management's office for agriculture, caused the first laugh in the room and made Lotte Ulbricht slightly upset: he greeted her as

"Comrade Walter Ulbricht."

After the lively discussion, in which many reported on their experiences and successes, Lotte Ulbricht praised the farmers' great talents and organizational skills

complained "that the farmers are not yet receiving the necessary support. That starts with the party's district leadership. Comrade Ulbricht suggested developing a complex and concrete plan to support women farmers in the district. Only if women are included in the management of the cooperative in accordance with their position in society can the district increase production to the maximum.<sup>11</sup>

Then she came to me. She had our agitation material in her hand and said what was the point of this industrial production in agriculture. I was irritated and

said that the party had decided so. And she was counting on Walter to explain to her at home what that meant. We obviously couldn't do that with our material.

Somehow our relationship didn't seem to have a happy star. The following year we wanted to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the democratic land reform with a state ceremony in Neubrandenburg and at the same time celebrate the GDR's first central harvest festival. After the harvest prospects were good in the spring, a wet summer caused huge declines. The stalks snapped under the rain, the grain fields lay flat. Even if

While the combine crews struggled bravely, the losses were great. With Berlin we decided to cancel the harvest festival. We still wanted to remember the land reform and the difficult beginning. Karl-Marx-Platz in Neubrandenburg was filled to capacity, so many wanted to see and hear Ulbricht speak.

While he was sitting in a television meeting with LPG chairmen, I was supposed to go up to the viewing platform of the House of Culture and Education with Lotte Ulbricht to show her the city from above. But oh, shocker: the elevator wasn't moving. What a disgrace. The technician was

helpless, pressed the buttons, and I also felt uncomfortable. Then Lotte Ulbricht bent down and picked something out of the guide groove in the door. She triumphantly held the crown cap of a beer bottle in front of our noses.

Apparently someone had celebrated the harvest festival.

The elevator door closed and we went up...

New Germany from November 29th

1963

## Peacemaking

Kurt Blecha

In June 1961, no one had any intention of building a wall

Kurt Blecha (1923-2013), Soviet prisoner of war in 1943, active in the National Committee "Free Germany" since its founding. 1946 Joined the SED. Worked at the until 1952

"Schweriner Volkszeitung", then, until 1958, deputy head of the press office of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the GDR, which he ultimately headed until 1989. The

Interview took place on January 26, 2013 after a hospital stay. Kurt Blecha died on March 1, 2013, shortly after his 90th birthday.

You led that memorable press conference on June 15, 1961 in the Great Ballroom of the House of Ministries. Around 350 journalists showed up. Sitting next to you were Walter Ulbricht and Gerhart Eisler, then deputy head of the State Broadcasting Committee, the Politburo member Albert Norden, Hermann Axen as editor-in-chief of Neue Deutschland and Gerhard Kegel as Ulbricht's employee. There it went

So about building a wall across Berlin?

Nonsense. On the same day, a Thursday, Khrushchev reported on Soviet television in Moscow about his meeting with US President Kennedy in Vienna<sup>1</sup>. The appearance was broadcast live by Intervision<sup>2</sup>; we knew the statement in advance, which was also published the other day on the first page of the SED's central organ under the heading:

»Peace settlement later this year.

The main thing: total disarmament." Ulbricht's press conference was the one reaction to it. Its thesis was: "Let's take advantage of this great opportunity

for the peace treaty and reunification."

Khrushchev's proposals for resolving the Berlin crisis<sup>3</sup> were aimed at a so-called three-state solution. West Berlin should unite as a free city

"legally founded and internationally guaranteed status", the four victorious powers should finally conclude a peace treaty with Germany, that is, with the two German states, on the basis of the Potsdam Agreement, which - thirdly - would be "a first and important step towards military neutralization". should. From "Reunification" was there

Khrushchev is not mentioned.

That's right. This was also one of the reasons why Ulbricht believed that the GDR should tell the world its position on Khrushchev's move. Ulbricht saw this as an opportunity "to reach an agreement on the peaceful solution of the German question between the partners of the anti-Hitler coalition and between the two German states"<sup>4</sup>. In his eyes, this was a "great opportunity" for the "national rebirth of Germany as a peace-loving and democratic state," a "starting point for a new development in Germany." The

He viewed the conclusion of a peace treaty as a "very large contribution to securing peaceful coexistence in Germany and to the rebirth of Germany." So it's quite clear: Walter Ulbricht set national accents. His formula from the

He used several "national rebirth" in his opening statement

Times. Like Ulbricht, I was at the founding of the National Committee

"Free Germany" was there in 1943: the anti-fascists gathered there wanted national rebirth.

Ulbricht drew this line quite deliberately.

As a line of tradition?

I guess he meant to say that

Firstly, the goal for which the NKFD set out as part of the anti-Hitler coalition - and thus the victorious powers - had not yet been achieved, so this calculation has remained open unchanged for sixteen years. And secondly, that the fatal post-war development in the form of German two-statehood, i.e. the division of Germany, must be corrected.

This aspect plays absolutely no role in the reports today. Of the press conference, only this sequence is shown - and again and again because it supposedly convicts Ulbricht of lying - when he answered a question from Annamarie Doherr<sup>5</sup> from

the Frankfurter Rundschau answers:

"Nobody has the intention to build a wall."

This quote not only ignores the entire historical-political context, but also what he said before and after. This practice is evidence, albeit evil, of the fact that sometimes half truths can be complete lies.

An American journalist - the press conference had been going on for some time - asked Ulbricht what he thought of the suggestion made yesterday by US Senator Mike Mansfield<sup>6</sup>. The Democratic faction leader didn't want all of Berlin

just make the western part a free city. Ulbricht said: "The capital of the GDR is not a subject of negotiations." But it goes without saying that after a peace treaty has been concluded

»Individual negotiations must take place on a number of issues that are of interest to the West Berlin population and the administration in West Berlin and which concern the relationship with the German Democratic Republic. This will all be clarified and agreed upon in objective negotiations."

Annamarie Doherr then spoke up, named her paper and said: "I would like to ask an additional question, sir

Chairman! In your opinion, does the formation of a Free City mean that the state border will be established at the Brandenburg Gate? And are you determined to take this fact into account with all the consequences?"

Ulbricht then stroked his beard and replied: "I understand your question to mean that there are people in West Germany who want us to mobilize the construction workers in the capital of the GDR to build a wall. I am not aware that such an intention exists. The construction workers of our capital are mainly engaged in housing construction, and their labor force

is fully used for this. Nobody has the intention to build a wall. I already said before: We are in favor of a contractual settlement of relations between West Berlin and the government of the German Democratic Republic. This is the easiest and most normal way to settle these issues.

As is well known, the state border runs

e.g. B. on the Elbe, etc. And the territory of West Berlin belongs to the territory of the German Democratic Republic.<sup>7</sup> In a certain sense, there are of course state border issues between West Berlin and the German Republic

Democratic Republic if West Berlin is neutralized. But there is a difference between the regulations that apply to the state border with West Germany and the regulations that apply to Berlin.

That was Ulbricht's entire and rather complex answer to Doherr. And when a wall was actually built around West Berlin based on the decision made in Moscow six weeks later, this one sentence was taken because the word "wall" happened to be there.

Apart from that, I find the mere fact that...

Ulbricht faced a few hundred journalists for several hours and spoke freely to all questions from local journalists as well as journalists from the USA, France, Great Britain, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Austria, Sweden and the Federal



Republic, not counting those from the socialist ones. Brother states and young nation states reacted very knowledgeably and confidently.

Yes, he wasn't shy, he liked it. In my role as head of the press office, I organized many such press conferences in the 1960s. Not later.

Ulbricht repeatedly raised the question of war and peace and the conclusion of a peace treaty. The economy also forced action, as did the overcoming of the Hallstein Doctrine, i.e. the recognition of the GDR...

He had a list of priorities. These points were secondary for him. "Whether one German government recognizes the other" is of secondary importance. »Whether we recognize each other or not – that is a completely subordinate question. The two German states simply exist. And anyone who thinks realistically takes note of this. Whether it suits this person or that person or not, that's there

quite insignificant."

The correspondent for the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung followed up: "On the occasion of the 15th anniversary of the SED, you spoke for the first time about the fact that the so-called human trafficking, as you said, the exodus from the republic, costs the citizens of the GDR over a billion a year. Is the urgency of the peace treaty and the solution of the West Berlin problem also related to this?"

Ulbricht also responded to this, albeit indirectly: "The poaching of people from the capital of the GDR and from the German Democratic Republic is one of them

Cold War Methods. Many spy agencies, West German, American, English and French, which are based in West Berlin, deal with human trafficking. We take it for granted that the so-called refugee camps in West Berlin will be closed and the people involved in human trafficking will leave West Berlin. This includes not only the spy centers of the West German Federal Republic, but also the spy services of the USA, France and England.

I would like to add that of course there are people and

there will be those who intend to change their place of residence. Some want to move from the German Democratic Republic to the West German Federal Republic, others want to move from the Federal Republic to the German Democratic Republic. A particularly large number of soldiers want to relocate from the West German Federal Republic to the GDR. Of course, this can only happen legally. The entry and exit of citizens of the German Democratic Republic - as in other countries - is regulated by law. In the USA as well as in Great Britain, in all countries, there is

a certain order for entry and exit and also for moving to another country. The same order exists in the German Democratic Republic, and this order will be adhered to.

Anyone who receives permission from the authorities of the German Democratic Republic, from the Ministry of the Interior, can leave the GDR. Whoever does not receive it cannot leave it. Anyone who receives permission from the West German Federal Republic to relocate to the GDR will relocate. Anyone who does not receive permission cannot relocate. This is an order like that in every state

consists. We think it should go without saying that the laws of the German Democratic Republic, which do not differ in this respect from the laws of the USA or other countries, are observed in the same way as the laws of, for example, Western European capitalist countries are observed. «

Was Ulbricht a little naïve?

I think he was diplomatic. And the role of the accuser, the victim, who was treated badly by others and complained about, was alien to him. He knew very well why the Travel Board had been in West Berlin for over ten years

Office8 existed, which is why there was no normal travel between East and West and West and East. »The freedom of movement of Germans in Germany is currently being prevented by the West German government. Citizens of the GDR who come to West Germany, have normal conversations with West German citizens and visit family are currently being arrested in large numbers in West Germany. This means that West Germany has erected an Iron Curtain. This goes so far that Mr. Adenauer has even declared that he is against the meeting between sports organizations and athletes.

This is, so to speak, treason," explained Ulbricht when asked about this by the British Daily Mail.

The editor-in-chief of Junge Welt, Dieter Kerschek, later editor-in-chief of the Berliner Zeitung from 1972 to the end of 1989, wanted to know whether a separate peace treaty between the Soviet Union and the GDR was conceivable, which was threatened by Khrushchev in the event that the Western powers would not agree to a common peace treaty with all of Germany. Ulbricht responded negatively.

So it's optimistic that such a joint agreement will be reached

would come.

You can see it like that. He did not address the thesis that such a treaty would mean the "final division of Germany." He was very pragmatic and didn't speculate; speculations like "What if?" didn't bother him. Instead, he explained: "The question today is simply this: either clear the way to German unity through the peace treaty, or - as is the case, for example. B. the War Minister Strauss wants West Germany to follow the path of a confederation of the imperialist Western powers and forego a nation-state

Politics of Germany. Since we are in favor of the reunification of Germany, we wish that the peace treaty with the two German states be concluded more quickly.

I would like to remind you that the Western powers concluded a whole series of treaties with West Germany. I recall the agreement on the creation of a separate currency, the agreement on the creation of the bizone, the Paris Treaties, and the incorporation of West Germany into NATO. I pose the question to the governments of the Western powers: Have you ever concluded these treaties which constituted an open breach of the Potsdam Treaty?

agreement, respects the opinion of the contracting partner of the anti-Hitler coalition, the Soviet Union? Never! The United States also signed a peace treaty with Japan without consulting the Soviet Union first. The Soviet Union, on the other hand, is acting loyally and acting under the sign of the desire for understanding by now proposing to the Western powers joint negotiations on the peace treaty with Germany - and negotiations between the two German states also on the question of the peace treaty. The Soviet Union's method is therefore different from that of the Western powers

in the Paris Agreement, in the Japan Treaty, in the integration of West Germany into NATO. I would like to remind you that the agreements concluded with West Germany in Paris were not approved by the West German population. The West German population was not asked at all.

A referendum on the Paris Treaties and integration into NATO was prevented by Mr. Adenauer. That's common knowledge." As far as I am informed, the GDR at the time wanted to control air traffic. If Tempelhof and Gatow in West Berlin – the airfield

Tegel didn't exist yet - if it was closed and all air traffic from Berlin to the federal territory would be handled in Schönefeld, the completely logical idea was that the hole in the fence could be closed. Because, as you know

The East Germans "fled" to West Berlin, and from there they flew to the Federal Republic. This problem would have been solved in an elegant way.

Yes, that's why Ulbricht's questions and answers about this complex took up quite a bit of space. In response to a corresponding question from a representative of the Westdeutsche Allgemeine Zeitung

he declared bluntly: "We have no intention of interrupting traffic. We intend to negotiate with the governments concerned about the new regulation of air transport. We are not at all interested in interrupting air traffic. What for? We are interested in a new regulation, that is, in creating a contractual basis for air traffic.«

The New York Times correspondent then asked whether he should understand that in the event of such an agreement, Tempelhof Airport would be closed

which caused general hilarity in the packed hall, although it wasn't clear to me why people were laughing: because the idea was so far-fetched, or because the man still hadn't understood that that was exactly what Ulbricht was after. Ulbricht then sibyllined: "That doesn't depend on me. Maybe he shuts himself down. That's not a problem for us. We await proposals from the Western powers on these issues. We will make our suggestions and they will make theirs. If the representatives of the Western powers or West Berlin suggest that Tempelhof Airport should be closed, we will discuss it.

What were the reactions like?

Officially? No. This ultimately led to the decision in Moscow to look for a solution to the Berlin and border problem other than the one sought in the peace treaty. However, there were sensible comments from the second and third rows.

After Ulbricht's press conference, Field Marshal Montgomery<sup>9</sup> called for the recognition of the GDR; Lord Beaverbrook<sup>10</sup> agreed with him a week later in the popular Sunday Express newspaper. »East Germany is a fact. Recognizing this would no more endanger West Berlin than it is currently at risk. As a matter of fact,

if we are wise, a state of recognition could bring even firmer arrangements for its security. This would satisfy the Russians, it would satisfy the Berliners, and it would satisfy Britain. The only opponents would be Dr. Adenauer and those like him who don't want East Germany to be recognized." In any case, the British people are not prepared to "fight" for West Berlin.

And the Sunday Times commented:

»One must also recognize that there is something in the Soviet argument that time has not stood still in the 16 years since the Potsdam Agreement

The right thing is."

And when nothing happened, Ulbricht sent a telegram to Chancellor Adenauer and Bundestag President Gerstenmayer on June 28th.

»Driven by concern for the future of the German nation, determined to contribute to securing peace in Germany and Europe and thereby to the reunification of Germany, the State Council of the German Democratic Republic turns to the German Bundestag and the government of the German Federal Republic with the Request to immediately initiate negotiations between representatives of both German states

to agree to a peace settlement with Germany and questions of reunification.

A historic opportunity for the German nation must be seized! According to the Soviet Union's proposal, the four powers should declare from the outset that they will recognize any agreement on a peace settlement and questions of reunification made by the Germans. In this way, we can work together to ensure that the national interests of the German people are safeguarded in the peace treaty, which will also resolve the West Berlin question.

The State Council of the Germans

Democratic Republic appeals to the German Bundestag and the government of the German Federal Republic not to carelessly squander another great opportunity for our nation, as has unfortunately happened all too often in the history of Germany to the misfortune of our German people.

This was not the first attempt to get Bonn to give in. However, it would be the last one before August 13, 1961. For me, this proves the West's complicity and responsibility for the construction of the wall.

Khrushchev and the new US President Kennedy met for the first time in Vienna. The future Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky wrote

In 1988 in his memoirs "In the Stream of Politics": "Khrushchev's meeting with Kennedy in Vienna on 3/4. June 1961 seemed to many people to have been a pointless conference. If you look at it in its larger context, Kennedy made it clear to Khrushchev that he would definitely keep up in this dangerous game of going to the edge of the abyss. A year later, during the missile crisis around Cuba, he managed to get the Russians to liquidate some of their missile sites, which posed too much of a provocation for America. Never before had the world been so close to the outbreak of a new war. And make no mistake: this war would have broken out and been fought in Europe, for example around Berlin, because if the Americans had done something in Cuba, it would certainly have ended immediately

Retaliation occurred in Europe. The seemingly senseless encounter in Vienna had convinced both of them that the other was determined to the utmost, and this realization ultimately led to the worst being avoided." On the return flight to Moscow, Khrushchev stopped in Berlin and briefed Ulbricht .

Ulbricht's press conference should also be seen against this background.

Intervision was the name of the association of television stations from the European socialist states, as well as the Austrian ORF and the Finnish YLE, founded in 1960.

According to the Western interpretation, the second began

"Berlin Crisis" - the first was the introduction of the D-Mark in West Berlin in 1948 with the subsequent blockade and airlift - in 1958.

The reason was the note from Moscow to the three Western occupying powers,

which ultimately called for an agreement within six months to transform West Berlin into an "independent political unit", a "free city". Moscow responded to the rejection by proposing to conclude a separate peace treaty with the GDR, in which all control rights that the Soviet Union had previously exercised in and around Berlin would be transferred to the GDR. In Vienna, Khrushchev renewed this demand to Kennedy. The "building of the wall" clarified the fronts and ended the "crisis".

This as well as all subsequent quotes, unless otherwise stated, in: Neues Deutschland from June 16, 1961, pp. 1-5

Annamarie Doherr (1909-1974) studied law and international law, completed her studies in Hamburg in 1933 without a degree and worked in Berlin since 1942

alive, for the Nazi press. From August 1945 to 1949 she worked for Berliner Rundfunk, after which she became a (West) Berlin correspondent for the SPD-affiliated Frankfurter Rundschau until 1969. She died in West Berlin at the age of 65 and became an artist at the side of her partner Lizzie Hosäus (1910–1998), buried in St. Anne's churchyard.

Mike Mansfield (1903-2001), Senator from

1953 to 1977, since 1961 also leader of the Democratic faction in the Senate. He held this position longer than any of his predecessors and successors. President Carter sent him as ambassador to Japan, where he remained until 1988. He was against segregation and the US war in Vietnam.

According to the Soviet and GDR understanding, Berlin (and that means the entire city) was in the territory of the Soviet occupation zone

or the GDR. In an internal information material on the right of the members of the People's Chamber of the capital of the GDR to participate equally in the work of the People's Chamber and on the illegal demand for voting rights for West Berliners in the West German Bundestag from

November 24, 1969 it says: "According to the agreements of the anti-Hitler coalition, the whole of Berlin ... legally belonged to the Soviet occupation zone. The participation of the armed forces of the three Western powers in the occupation and administration of

Berlin, the seat of the Allied Control Council, did not change this legal situation. The Allied Control Council confirmed in February 1947 that Berlin

'Capital of the Soviet Occupation Zone'." (quoted in Klaus Emmerich, Grenz.

Legal and contemporary historical aspects, Berlin 2009, p. 170). Emmerich continues: During a conversation between Bahr and

Falin on 5/7. In August 1970, the Soviet representative pointed out "that there were two Control Council resolutions from 1946 and 1947 in which Berlin, and indeed all of Berlin, was designated as the capital of Brandenburg and the SBZ. In this respect, the government in East Berlin is legal, while West Berlin has been torn away and made into something of its own without anyone having been able to give it a legal basis. The only realistic basis must be that the capital exists the GDR and the special structure of West Berlin. There were no occupation rights in relation to the capital of the GDR. If there are discussions, they will only be held regarding West Berlin.

The Allied Travel Agency was set up in West Berlin in 1950 because, at Bonn's request, GDR passports were not available in western countries, especially NATO countries

were accepted. GDR citizens had to apply for a travel permit there, which was granted or refused after an examination that often lasted several weeks. On the one hand, the Western powers had knowledge and control over the travel activities of GDR cadres (and above all about their purpose), and they were able to prevent these trips by refusing to do so. This was widely used. It was not until 1970 that the Travel Board Office stopped its discriminatory activities.

Bernard Montgomery (1887-1976), a British career officer who commanded the British-Canadian Armed Forces until the end of the war after establishing the 2nd Front in Western Europe. Until 1946, commander-in-chief of the British occupation forces in Germany and member of the Allied Control Council. From 1951 to 1958 he was Deputy Supreme Commander of NATO.

Lord Beaverbrook (1879-1964), actually Max Aitken, Canadian-British publisher and conservative politician, first minister for aircraft production and then for supplies during the Second World War.

Viktor G. Kulikov

The GDR was sovereign, but not in the military-political area

Wiktor G. Kulikov, born in 1921, farmer's son, soldier since 1939, commanded tank units on the Belorussian and Baltic Sea fronts.

Visit to the Frunze Military Academy and the General Staff Military Academy in the 1950s. Commander of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSSD) from 1969 to

1971. Then until 1977 Chief of the General Staff of the Soviet Armed Forces. From 1977 to 1989, Commander-in-Chief of the United Forces of the Warsaw Treaty. On January 14, 1977, he was awarded the rank of Marshal of the Soviet Union. Member of the Russian Duma since 1989. The "Hero of the Soviet Union" Kulikov died shortly before the book went to print on December 27th. May 2013 in Moscow.

Comrade Marshal, you were head of the Soviet armed forces in the GDR between 1969 and 1971, i.e. at the time when Walter Ulbricht

lost his position as First Secretary of the Central Committee. What memories do you have of it?

My memories of "Comrade Walter," as we confidently called him in the group of Soviet armed forces in Germany, are not extensive and are also contradictory. I would like to mention two incidents: After a maneuver in which we rehearsed what military power was necessary to repel NATO attacks, he said: "Comrade Marshal, do everything you can to prevent such a war from taking place! Our weapons should serve peace and nothing and

no one else." This longing for peace from a seasoned German communist made a strong impression on me.

I will never forget the second incident of a completely different kind: In the spring of 1971, another maneuver took place to mark the 15th anniversary of the GDR's National People's Army. After the troops marched past Magdeburg, an evaluation was carried out. The report was made by GDR Defense Minister Army General Heinz Hoffmann. After that, the three of us – our ambassador Pyotr Abrassimov, Erich Honecker and I – separated from the rest

Those present were removed and the situation in the GDR was discussed in private. It was essentially about "Comrade Walter". He did a lot for Germany: in the National Committee "Free Germany" and in the reconstruction of the country destroyed by the war. But it is becoming increasingly difficult for him to perceive political reality, says Honecker.

Perhaps this was due to age - after all, Ulbricht was almost eighty years old at the time. The rift between the first and second secretaries of the party<sup>11</sup> could not be overlooked. As Soviet military men, this really affected us because we didn't have any

Forgot that he fought alongside us against the fascists back then. We were brothers in arms, so to speak.

You know how things turned out.

The so-called construction of the Wall is associated with Ulbricht's name. How did you see the "Wall"?

When the Berlin Wall was being built, I served as head of a group of Soviet military experts in the Republic of Ghana to provide technical assistance in building military forces. Later, in 1977, when I became Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty States, I vilified those who are so insulted today

Learned to appreciate the Berlin Wall. If the Federal Republic of Germany joined NATO, any border incident between the two German states could have turned into a nuclear world war because then the alliance would have occurred. The border security measures in 1961 clarified the situation. Against this background, détente policies, treaties and disarmament talks only became possible. It was a peacekeeping measure. Even though it was the right decision by the alliance, and of course we as the leading power had the decisive say, Ulbricht alone took the beating for it.

He was attacked in the west. To this day he is slandered and appears in many history books as a "wall builder" and "liar." This is largely due to us. We should have said clearly then and later: It was not Ulbricht and not the GDR that took the border measures August 13, 1961, but the Warsaw Treaty. Ulbricht, to use our language, lay in the first trench and drew fire on himself. And unfortunately we left him to fight alone for a long time.

In June 1996 you sent a letter<sup>12</sup> to the Berlin Regional Court, which also included Army General

Gribkov - he was chief of staff of the United Armed Forces from 1976 to 1989 - signed. They gave German lawyers tutoring in history when they took action against GDR border guards and members of the Politburo.

Let's put it this way: We wanted to make political and historical connections visible. The "inner German border" ceased to exist in the mid-1950s. With the Federal Republic of Germany joining NATO on May 9, 1955 and the GDR joining the Warsaw Treaty Organization on May 15 of the same year

Not only was the division of Germany finally cemented. This border was also the sensitive dividing line between the two powerful military groups, whose reliable military security was of primary importance.

Therefore, the events on this border between 1961 and 1989 cannot be separated from the historical context of the Cold War and the constant confrontation of significant military potential that characterized the situation on our continent during this period.

In the accounts of Ulbricht and Ulbricht that have been common since 1961

His contribution to the "building of the Wall" is treated as if he was solely responsible for it; some historians even went so far as to claim that he urged, if not even forced, Moscow to take this measure.

All important decisions related to the problems of the defense of the GDR, including border security, were made taking into account the interests of the states participating in the Warsaw Treaty. That's why the security measures from 13.

August 1961 in Berlin was the result of a decision by the Politisch

Advisory Committee of the States Participating in the Warsaw Treaty. This border and the border security measures were of great importance for maintaining peace in Europe during the Cold War period. That is why we, the Soviet side, always actively and effectively influenced all border security measures, including the pioneering expansion of the state border.

Based on this, the issues of the border regime were resolved both through agreements between the GDR and the USSR and within the framework of the

regulated by the Warsaw Treaty. The GDR, as our most important ally, has always acted with great discipline in the interests of our alliance

"Recommendations" and "requests," which actually represented instructions, were subordinated.

What did the "active and effective influence on all border security measures" actually look like?

The High Command of the United Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty was always responsible for the strength, structure, armament and training of the GDR's border troops as well as all border security measures

including the pioneering expansion of the state border. On the instructions of the Soviet military-political leadership, we actively influenced these measures. Since the National People's Army and the border troops of the GDR would have been subordinate to the commander-in-chief of the group of Soviet armed forces in Germany in a state of defense and would have had to fulfill their tasks as part of the front led by him, the high command and the staff of the United Armed Forces influenced the situation Training of border troops and the expansion of the state border.

All important documents about the state border, including the minefields, were at the GSSD headquarters.

There was no Soviet regimental commander, division commander or army commander who did not regularly inspect "his section of the border" with the officers of the GDR border troops. In the event of a defense, 70 percent of the border troops deployed on the GDR-FRG border would have been subordinate to the Soviet commanders and 30 percent to the NVA division commanders.

Since the 45,000 members of the GDR border troops, even if they did not belong to the United Armed Forces during peacetime, were counted among the combat elements in their operational plans and had their specific tasks, the orders and directives of the

Commander-in-Chief of the United Armed Forces specified specific tasks for them the defense and security of the state border and for the interaction of the land forces with the border troops. For this reason, the border troops took part in joint exercises between the Soviet Army and the National

People's Army part.

The Commander-in-Chief of the United Armed Forces and his staff were always informed about the situation at the state border and about serious, special incidents in the border area through the representative of the Commander-in-Chief in the NVA of the GDR. This Soviet general, who represented the Commander-in-Chief of the United Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty in the NVA and worked in the GDR Ministry of Defense, received the operational daily report every day at 8 a.m. and took part in all college meetings and commanders' meetings in the GDR

and had the right to carry out checks on the branches of the armed forces and on the border troops in the GDR.

But now the GDR was a sovereign state...

The GDR was a sovereign state, a member of the UN and diplomatically recognized by 138 countries. It was sovereign in all areas - but, in our opinion, not in the military-political and military areas. There were two reasons for this.

First: the exposed military geographical location of the GDR in Europe as an outpost of the Warsaw Treaty and the presence there

500,000-strong elite group of Soviet troops, unparalleled in combat power, equipped with the most modern weapons and equipment, including nuclear weapons, on the territory of the GDR. As a result, the front edge of the first strategic defense line of the United Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty ran along the state border of the GDR and the FRG. That is why the Soviet side also had military say on the territory of the GDR.

Second: the permanent integration of the GDR and its armed organs into the Warsaw military organization

Treaty as well as the integration of the NVA and the border troops of the GDR in the event of defense into the GSSD front, which had to fulfill tasks set by Moscow. Therefore, the organization of the GDR's national defense, its strength, armament, equipment, deployment and training was always subordinated to the initial orientations from Moscow.

These two factors and other questions, some of which still stem from the occupation period, were the reasons why the GDR was not sovereign in the military-political area.

So if I understand you correctly, it was

Neither Walter Ulbricht nor the GDR was at any point in control of the border issue?

Taking these facts into account, both the political and military leadership of the GDR were not free in their decisions. The leadership of the GDR was unable to do anything independently on the border with the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin. Any change in the order on the common border of the Warsaw Treaty participating states required coordination with it, that is, with the highest bodies of its participating states. Sole decisions made by the leadership of the GDR

These questions were excluded because going it alone would have affected the interests of the Warsaw Treaty and thereby threatened it. This would never have been permitted by treaty members, primarily the Soviet Union.

There never officially was a role for the Second Secretary of the SED Central Committee. This designation was only used internally because Honecker headed the secretariat's activities under Ulbricht.

See "Letter from Marshal of the Soviet Union Kulikov and Army General Gribkow" in: Klaus-Dieter Baumgarten and Peter Freitag (eds.), *The Borders of the GDR. History, facts, background*, Berlin 2005, pp. 8-12

sleight of hand

Manfred Wekwerth

Brecht was a communist

Manfred Wekwerth, born in 1929, born and raised in Köthen, 1948 high school diploma, 1949/50 new teacher, 1951 head of an amateur theater group in the Society for German-Soviet Friendship, from March 1, 1951 at the Berliner Ensemble, since 1952 as Brecht's assistant director, 1953 SED, 1955 director at the BE, 1960 chief director, left the BE in 1968 because Helene Weigel only wanted to play Brecht and no more contemporary plays.

Director at the Zurich Schauspielhaus from 1973 to 1976 (with his wife Renate Richter as an actress), where he was offered to take over the management of the theater in 1976. He also directed at the Deutsches Theater and guest directed at the National Theater London (1971).

From 1971 to 1979 he also directed films in Babelsberg. 1977 director of the BE. 1979 and 1983 guest director at the Vienna Burgtheater, after the death of Konrad Wolf in 1982 President of the Academy of Arts, 1986 member of the Central Committee of the SED, 1988 Karl Marx Order, three-time National Prize winner of the GDR.

You were there until his death in 1956

Brecht's closest collaborator. What was his relationship with Ulbricht?

First of all: I liked Ulbricht simply because he went to the theater. His successor was, to put it cautiously, a little more reserved in this respect. Honecker once explained this to me like this: When Ulbricht sees something on stage or in the cinema, he comments afterwards. If he liked something, everyone else would like it too, and if he didn't like it, it would be trashed. He didn't want that, said Honecker, so he stayed at home and watched TV. Well, that was a very cheap excuse, but not entirely unreasonable.

There were some who invited Ulbricht for precisely this reason. Mäde<sup>1</sup> liked doing that. When he was once severely attacked in Rostock during a guest performance with a Soviet piece because it allegedly insulted the Red Banner Fleet, he said: Why, Comrade Ulbricht really liked the piece. Whoops, and all the critics immediately changed course.

When Ulbricht came to the theater: did he just rush around, or did he also meet the theater people?

He liked talking to people, especially the ladies. Gisela May had

He was particularly fond of it.

Did he come with a large entourage or just Lotte?

The entourage came before and after. Beforehand, the entire house was inspected and the telephones were disconnected. In my study in the tower, security always installed their telephones when important visitors came. The line went over to the Friedrichstadtpalast, and I was no longer allowed into my room during this time. Once I returned the other day and the red telephone was still there. I picked up the receiver and answered: "Wekwerth, Berliner Ensemble, you forgot a telephone at my place." The reply came harshly:

"We don't forget anything!" Good, I said and hung up, then it's mine. I gave the device to our chief dramaturg, who needed one at the time, and I told our technician that he could pick up thirty meters of copper wire from me; it was hanging out of my window and was abandoned. He was very happy about it.

Copper pipes were rare.

Have you ever welcomed Ulbricht at BE?

I was a little assistant director...

There were differences between Ulbricht and Brecht in the early 1950s.

They were not of a personal nature,

but went back to the formalism discussion in Moscow. All exiles were influenced by this in some way. Brecht had a very difficult time against this team with Rodenberg<sup>2</sup>, Valentin<sup>3</sup> etc. Without the huge guest performance successes in Paris with "Mother Courage" and "Arturo Ui", the existence of the BE would hardly have been secure. But: Although Ulbricht rejected this kind of theater - like many intellectuals - he was tolerant enough and prevented an existential culture war from breaking out. Ulbricht is said to have even donated an extension to the BE...?

This goes back to Weigel<sup>4</sup>. Even in her old age, she was still very charming and could charm people. At an awards ceremony in the Red Town Hall - the BE had received the National Prize in 1961 for its production of "Frau Flinz" - she brought Ulbricht to our table. He talked to us for about three quarters of an hour, while Weigel chased everyone away, even ministers who wanted something from him. In the end, Walter handed over the money and, in return, received a lesson about epic theater from us. It was always assumed that Brecht and his plays were only upside down

not aimed at feeling. Walter was not free from this idea either.

Ulbricht was interested in art.

Absolutely, but he also considered himself an architect. Whenever he was presented with a model, he basically demolished the buildings; that was just the way it was supposed to be. Knowing this bad habit, Henselmann<sup>5</sup> had attached the houses to the plate with screws in a model of Weimar. That didn't turn out so well. Another time they both had a fight, which I think made both of them likeable. Henselmann praised the Berlin television tower, which he designed, as a landmark of the new era and compared it to the pyramids,

because these also represent an era. But then, in the evening sun, a cross formed on the ball, which was not necessarily considered a symbol of socialism. Walter was beside himself and sent for Henselmann. Where does he see a cross? Henselmann asked hypocritically, shaking his head when Ulbricht pointed to the ball. Henselmann said he didn't see a cross there, which was a plus. The plus as a gain of the socialist order!

On June 17, 1953, you carried a letter from Brecht to Ulbricht.

Three letters. I took the others to Semyonov<sup>6</sup> and the Prime Minister

Grotewohl<sup>7</sup>.

I was a high school student back then

"New Germany" read part of the letter to Ulbricht, and only after the fall of the Wall did I read the entire text<sup>8</sup>. Can you explain how this cut came about? I cannot imagine that this was done on the instructions of Ulbricht or the Politburo. The letter was very good.

I think there was a consensus in the party at the time that they didn't want a popular debate or a discussion of errors, which Brecht had called for. The editor-in-chief, that was Rudolf Herrnstadt, himself

have lent a hand. At that time I took part in the party active conference in the Friedrichstadtpalast on June 16th, after which people heard the singing of the

"Internationale" went to bed feeling calm and said that the matter was over. Brecht then called Rühle<sup>9</sup>, Palitzsch<sup>10</sup> and me to his apartment in Weißensee and said: This is just beginning! The party had received a slap in the face from the workers, he said later, but a slap in the face was also a touch. So for him it wasn't negative, but a kind of alienation, a departure, a new view of something. That's why he wrote this sentence, which he was very fond of

which was, however, deleted, stating that the party had to hold a major popular debate about the achievements - land reform, education reform, economic reform, etc. - in order to view and secure this social progress. It should be made clear that there has been a break with the capitalist past. Instead, we explained that we were continuing traditions, that we were preserving civic traditions so as not to scare people away. No, the GDR was a break in German history. And that, according to Brecht, must be done by people

be made aware. They should have been frightened and not calmed down!

After June 17th, Brecht definitely wanted to awaken people's sense of guilt. The Nazi capitalist era was by no means ideologically over. I wasn't a Nazi, I was in the Hitler Youth, but the Prussian virtues that were taught to us were internalized. And that's probably how it was for most East Germans. This consciousness had to be radically destroyed.

But weren't those who declared back then also right: We, the socialist German state, preserve

the bourgeois-humanistic traditions that the capitalist society of the Federal Republic is destroying?

That was certainly true, but it was just a task. One couldn't forget the other person about that. Namely, to make the radical cut.

Brecht was an enthusiastic communist. It was therefore clear to him that an enormous amount had to be done to build the foundations of socialism, even though we could not have afforded it materially in 1952<sup>11</sup>. New thinking and new actions were all the more urgent.

When Brecht died on June 17, 1953

When he saw a Soviet tank rolling in, he said that now "our demonstration" was beginning. Can you briefly explain what he meant by that?

Brecht was of the opinion that the workers in Stalinallee were right to strike. At the same time, however, he also saw the beginning of the counterrevolution. And he feared the outbreak of another world war if the West got involved. For once, the Americans were smart enough and didn't do it; for example, they forbade Egon Bahr from sending this resolution to the RIAS. We, Brecht, Rühle, Palitzsch and I, sat in Weißensee around midnight

and were depressed about the developments when the Soviet T 34s rolled past outside. Then Brecht said that sentence.

At that time he also considered joining the party.

Yes, but he soon discarded the idea. It was better that way too.

Allegedly. Then he might have come into conflict with party discipline.

On June 17th, Brecht, Strittmatter, Rühle and I were at Unter den Linden and mingled with the people. Brecht discussed with them. In front of the tanks

A jeep with the city commander rolled up, and the tanks drove with their hatches open. The soldiers saw the people and thought they were cheering them, but that was a mistake. They only noticed this when a hail of stones began. They then closed the hatches and fired into the air.

The grandstand from May 1st still stood on Schlossplatz. A people's policeman went up and we thought what everyone else was thinking at that moment: Now he's going to take over state power. But he said in the most beautiful Saxon language that a single shoe had been found, the owner

please contact him. His message caused such hilarity that everything soon went south.

There is a lot of talk about June 17, 1953. It is hardly known that five years earlier there was a general strike in the Bizone against price increases, for higher wages and for co-determination. On October 28, 1948, there were serious riots in Stuttgart. US military police used tear gas and tanks. 79 percent of West German workers took part in the largest strike since the Kapp Putsch in 1920. He was crushed by the Americans.<sup>12</sup> However, in contrast to June 17th, this is not the case

in the GDR – not a word was lost.

Yes. They don't work through their own history.

In your autobiography you report on the union meeting on

June 24, 1953, where Brecht gave a remarkable political speech. We owe the minutes of this appearance to Erwin Geschonneck<sup>13</sup>, then union chairman at BE.



Yes, I find this speech more relevant than ever. Any consideration, any protection of the petty bourgeoisie is wrong; one must emphasize the great achievements in the eight years since the end of the war, said Brecht. All other questions –

such as the maintenance of the civil-humanist heritage – are secondary. We “sold” our state poorly; the majority believed that they were still living in a bourgeois state with, at best, socialist tendencies.

I didn't read this spontaneous speech by Brecht until much later.

Probably in the young world, where I published it a few years ago for the reason you mentioned.

That is true. Then let me go into more detail. »The government itself says that there were reasons. The bitterness had its reasons. To

At the same time, it is not so easy to accept that provocateurs could persuade the bitter population to act in such a way. That is already worrying. I will say that when I look at what was on display, I had the impression early on that it was a serious and horrific matter that workers in particular were demonstrating here.

I also give them 100% every right. I knew they had been prevented from venting their bitterness, and they did. But what happened between eleven, twelve and thirteen o'clock certainly shows

other – I speak of what I saw. This Berlin is in a mental state that it apparently was in during the Nazi era” - so here comes what you already pointed out, this ideological reference. »There are still enormous residues left. It is one of the main mistakes of the SED - in my opinion - and the government that they did not really eliminate these Nazi elements in people and in their brains. It is a mistake, we know this from our art field, that it was a taboo, a prohibition to speak of Nazi barbarism. There were books on

Prevented from coming out when it talked about it. People have talked about the wonderful culture of the German people, about the positive. There was recently this unnecessary discussion about Eisler's FAUSTUS text. Years ago with our play THE HOFMEISTER we experienced a similar sharp attack because we showed people their plight. But the whole Nazi gang is still there. She no longer rules, but spiritually she is still very much alive. This was supposed to be covered up, no one faced it. This is a matter that should be dug up in the future. You should explain what

is really socialism, that has not been done at all. Socialist institutions have been created and tremendous achievements have been achieved that only very few people are aware of. This is a great failure; these great achievements have been constantly brought up in the form of adulation and platitudes, but not really made known. Art can help a lot. It must try to uncover the roots of Nazism and capitalism, which exist in a specifically German way, going back far into the unfortunate and dirty history

to deal with, clarify and at the same time really explain what was new: these great upheavals in the countryside, expulsion of the Junkers, destruction of the monopolies, education for those who were excluded from education, instead of education only for a small ruling class, Takeover of the companies. These are things that have not really been brought into consciousness,” explains Brecht seven days after June 17, 1953. “That is the main mistake of the SED - in my opinion... The West does not criticize the mistakes that were actually made here , but criticizes them

advantages of this state. These gentlemen are bothered by the change in ownership of the means of production. For them, there is too much socialism here, when we are talking about there being too little socialism.

In this context, I remember a performance by Günter Mittag<sup>14</sup> at the academy. As is well known, members of the Politburo regularly had to answer questions in front of the plenary session of the Academy of Arts. This didn't happen in any other country. All questions were allowed there. Best of all, don't hold it against me, we liked Army General Heinz

Hoffmann, who, as defense minister, once commented very convincingly on Tucholsky's statement that soldiers are murderers. He drew attention to the dialectic that this was a question of the political system. Günter Mittag was terrified and thought he would be merciful to us by handing over three computers. Peter Hacks<sup>15</sup>, unmoved, spoke up. “Mr. Mittag, I have a question: Why are you reintroducing capitalism in the GDR?” Mittag's face turned red. Hacks justified his question by pointing out, among other things, that the economic guidelines and premises in the GDR

always oriented towards capitalist guidelines. We would just copy the West instead of using our own standards.

That was also Brecht's concern that communist values could fall by the wayside if we pursued too much bourgeois, humanistic tradition.

Even. This was also the conflict between Brecht and Langhoff<sup>16</sup>, between BE and Deutsches Theater, between Brecht and Rodenberg. Of course, Brecht also “maintained” the bourgeois heritage, but he changed it in a socialist way.

The 50s and 60s were political

aesthetically the most productive years the GDR had. There was a lively and controversial debate, even though, for example, Busch<sup>17</sup> - who invoked the class struggle in his songs - was not played for a while because they allegedly disrupted the desired harmony. It wasn't just theorized. The theater performances were placed against each other:

»Egmont« in the German Theater against

"Winter Battle" in BE.

If a revolution gets stuck halfway, it can fall back into feudalism, says Volker Braun<sup>18</sup> in "Great Peace," one of his best pieces. The

The performance was not very popular, but it was recorded by GDR television in 1979 "for archive purposes." When Braun received the Büchner Prize, the most important literary prize in the Federal Republic of Germany, in 2000, he suggested that perhaps the recording of the revolutionary play from back then could be broadcast. Those responsible for television watched the recording - and refused to broadcast it. The production, it was said, contradicted the image of the GDR, which was based on lack of culture and dogmatism.

Let's talk about Ulbricht again. What did you think?

about him back then, how do you see him now?

What I admired about him was his organizational talent. When he picked something up, it worked. I remember the exhibition he organized on the sidelines of the VI. had the party conference organized in 1963. The latest technical equipment from all over the world was there - and ours next to it. This impressed me for two reasons: on the one hand, it revealed his own inadequacy, and on the other hand - which is why all the company directors had to watch the exhibition - Ulbricht saw it as a challenge. He wanted her

provoke.

On the other hand, his language always bothered me. It is said that Stalin advised him to go to a speech therapist to alleviate this. Stalin had similar problems with his Georgian. Ulbricht did not follow this advice. We made fun of his Saxon in Brecht's presence. A statesman shouldn't talk like that.

Brecht replied - and he meant it seriously - we should be quiet. This is finally a politician who relies on the content being correct, where the statements have to be more important than his rhetoric. Brecht didn't like blenders.

Is Stalin's advice guaranteed?

This is what Falin<sup>19</sup> told me. Stalin knew the problem with language. That's why he only gave a few speeches on the radio. His dialect was not well received by many people in the Soviet Union.

In 1951 Ulbricht saw the premiere of

"The Condemnation of Lucullus" by Brecht/Dessau in the State Opera. Pieck and Grotewohl then sought a conversation with Brecht, while Ulbricht openly criticized him. Does this have anything to do with the Soviet debates you were talking about earlier?

I mean yes. The Soviet one

Politburo member Zhdanov<sup>20</sup> had started this nonsensical formalism debate, which affected even the greatest Soviet artists such as Prokofiev and Shostakovich in music.

His Zhdanovschchina survived him; as is well known, he himself had died in 1948. And Ulbricht was a little, let's say, more disciplined than Pieck and Grotewohl. A certain "Orlov" - Semyonov is believed to be behind it - had on the 21st.

In January 1951, "The Paths and Mistakes of Modern Art" was published in the Tägliche Rundschau, the newspaper of the Soviet occupying power. In it the author spoke out against "them

anti-democratic direction of the modernists, formalists, subjectivists and so on. The one that then began in the GDR

"Discussion" set us back at least twenty years in cultural policy. And this verdict also fell into place

»Lukullus«, one of the best contemporary operas. Dessau<sup>21</sup> had removed the strings from the orchestra; the sound was very unusual. I had received cards from the FDJ Central Council and instructions, especially on these

To respect "popularity". That was Zhdanov's verdict: popular rather than "pure."

individualistic feelings of a small group of select aesthetes".

The performance overwhelmed me, I was confused. Of course the music was unusual, but if you got into it, it was perfectly acceptable. But the party had agreed that it should be rejected. And there were appropriately prepared groups in the hall. But at the end, most of the audience stood on their chairs cheering. No modern opera had ever achieved such success. And that was precisely the difficulty: the play was supposed to be trashed, but it was praised excessively by the audience. Then the conciliatory one

Pieck gave Brecht ten suggested changes, which he followed. But Ulbricht was on the Soviet line. A piece of music was needed for the discussion of formalism, and it was probably by chance that "Lukullus" came across it.

Dessau was clueless. He had wanted the best. But we boys resented Brecht for changing the title. He turned the "Interrogation of Lucullus" into the "Condemnation of Lucullus," thereby anticipating the result and violating his own theatrical principles. The original title was open; at the end the viewer had to decide for himself whether to condemn Lucullus

or was to be praised.

It is said that Brecht once wrote about...

"denazen" spoken. This is said to have gone back to a speech Ulbricht gave in 1948 on the expropriation of Nazi and war criminals.

Yes, the quote in the Arbeitsjournal was exactly: "De-Nazifying the German bourgeoisie means de-citizenizing; it has no way ahead of it, only always this or that way out." In 1953, Brecht criticized the failure to practice this with the necessary radicalism. We already talked about this.

After the first German meeting in 1950, West German participants took part in the

Border held for several days. Brecht wrote a text about this

"Herrnburger Report," and Dessau wrote the music for it. The work was the III. Dedicated to the World Festival in the summer of 1951 and the FDJ, and he therefore sent it in advance to the FDJ chairman

»Honegger«. He insisted on deleting the line that said: "And if Ernst Busch sang, you would be there." Otherwise the piece would not be played. Brecht rejected the correction that Busch was one of the best singers and actors in the world! But Dessau, beaten because of "Lukullus," deleted the line. Ernst Busch took revenge in his own way. That was his

Record company "Song of Time". When he published "Mother Courage" there, he wrote on the cover of the song, the most famous in the piece and of course from Dessau, "You captains, let the drums rest":

"Based on an old Marseille dock workers' song."

In what context did Brecht say: I do not have my opinions because I am here, but I am here because I have my opinions?

He wrote this in a letter to a West German writer who accused him of misbehaving on June 17th.

Brecht's funeral took place in a small circle of around twenty people. The next day, on August 18, 1956, there was a large memorial service in the BE, at which Ulbricht, Becher, Wandel, Strittmatter and Lukacs also spoke. Can you still remember that?

No, just because I had to carry the coffin with three others and it was incredibly heavy. As is well known, Brecht was superstitious about many things and had the terrible idea that he would not go into the coffin dead, but only seemingly dead. That's why he ordered the doctors to give him a stiletto after his clinical death

to stab in the heart. And that he wants to be buried in a zinc coffin out of disgust for the worms that might eat him. A Berlin company made the thing overnight, it looked like an ammunition box that went into the wooden coffin. And we four skinny assistants had to carry this heavy coffin.

Even if you no longer remember Ulbricht's eulogy at Brecht's grave, what is your opinion of Ulbricht today?

Of the communists who had survived the difficult Nazi and Soviet times, he was the most capable organizer in every sense, including in thought. And him

I regretted that he failed to do anything about his less than friendly public image. Most people appreciated what he did, but many people didn't like him. He had managed to get this small country into shape, but failed to win over everyone. Castro made far bigger mistakes than Ulbricht, he imposed hardships on the Cubans that would have led to catastrophe in the GDR - but Castro had charisma, an aura, which is why the Cubans forgave him for a lot of things and followed him. There's this sentence from Bloch that I don't subscribe to, but it's completely absurd

not: A man without sex appeal shouldn't do politics. Ulbricht couldn't help it that he wasn't like Pieck, whose kindness made him approachable and fatherly. Ulbricht seemed unapproachable, which was what his brittle nature meant. Ulbricht's organizational skills and Pieck's humanity combined in one person: That would have been a dawn for the socialist idea in Germany. I think that Ulbricht's greatest achievement was in the New Economic System, in this idea of reformed socialism, in which public ownership moved from a formal category to actual collective ownership

should be. That helped me get over a lot of things. I can't say that I loved Ulbricht. But I liked him for this strategic consideration. The fact that the NÖSPL was not realized was a tragedy.

And I personally felt sorry for him when this picture appeared in New Germany on his birthday: him in a dressing gown and slippers.

But why didn't you like him? Ulbricht read a lot, which I thought was great. But he misunderstood some things.

Max Walter Schulz, editor-in-chief of Sinn und Form, got in touch and asked that the young poets, even if they did not publish, receive material material

should be ensured. Then Ulbricht gave a fiery speech lasting one and a half hours: The message was that they should write at night. They, Ulbricht and others of his generation, had to work hard during the day to secure their existence, and only then would they have written. He always generalized, applied his experiences to the present, and when he spoke for himself, he thought he was speaking for the whole class.

What do you think?

It was between the V and VI. Party congress, i.e. after the so-called thaw period, as Kurella - responsible for culture in the Politburo

-

Artist received and explained that never before has the connection between party and art been as good and close as it is now. So we were sitting in the meeting room of the Central Committee and had in mind the current discussion that was taking place in the

ND about gray metal vases that had aroused Ulbricht's displeasure at the art exhibition in Dresden. The discussion went along the lines of: There were intellectuals who wanted to take away the color of the working class! Gisela May<sup>22</sup> railed against this. Baierl<sup>23</sup> and I wrote a poem about it. The party had already won many a culture war, it said, and then we counted the pointless ones

Fight against striped socks, studded pants, beat music, etc. - pointless insofar as we in the GDR produced these ourselves a little later, after we had previously dealt with them ideologically and hurt each other in the process.

Anna Seghers<sup>24</sup> also exploded. She spoke for the first time about a spiritual narrowness in this country that had to be overcome. Konrad Wolf<sup>25</sup> complained that Soviet films were "filtered" or sorted out. Fritz Cremer<sup>26</sup> protested against the interference in art by some ignorant cultural officials... Ulbricht sat at the front

on a chair, there was no presidium. In my opinion, he was poorly prepared by Kurella and knew nothing about these contradictions. Then Paul Wiens<sup>27</sup> also started talking about the gray vases, and Ulbricht repeatedly interrupted him and discussed with him. He was really good at that. In his closing remarks he went into this again and explained that art wanted to prescribe colorlessness, gloom and little joy of life to the working class. What no one asked for. That's why I shouted: "What you're saying, Comrade Ulbricht, is not true!" It wasn't "the artists" who wanted gray vases, but Gisela May

a gray vase. By the way, I also love gray vases, others prefer colored ones. You appreciate colorful vases, Comrade Ulbricht, all right. This is not a political question, but rather a question of taste. So let people decide for themselves.

Ulbricht thanked him and came to the end.

The next day Baierl and I were ordered to Sindermann<sup>28</sup>. Everything was fine, there were no consequences for me interrupting Ulbricht, he laughed about it himself afterwards.

Wonderful, we thought, Brecht was right after all, with words you can not only change the world, but also Ulbricht

change... Yes, said Sindermann, we told Ulbricht that you had emptied a bottle of vodka at the buffet during the break because of your excitement and that you were a little fueled by the alcohol.

The party was right again and we were wrong.

Hans-Dieter Mäde (1930-2009), theater director and general director of the DEFA studio for feature films since 1977, long-time general director of the theaters in Karl-Marx-Stadt and Dresden.

Hans Rodenberg (1895-1978), theater director who graduated from Reinhardt's acting school at the German Theater. In exile in the Soviet Union from 1932 to 1948, she founded the Theater of Friendship in Berlin from 1960 to 1963

Deputy Minister of Culture, member of the State Council and Vice President of the Academy of Arts from 1969 to 1978.

Maxim Vallentin (1904-1987), theater director and actor, exile in the Soviet Union from 1935 to 1945, director of the Maxim Gorki Theater in Berlin since 1952. He was one of the main representatives of the "Stanislavsky system" and therefore an opponent of the school influenced by Brecht. Brecht was of the opinion that the actor had to keep a critical distance from the person being portrayed and deliberately remove the illusion from his performance so that the socially critical message was in the foreground (V effect), while Konstantin Stanislavski (1863-1938) demanded that the actors create parallel situations to copy from one's own experience in order to be able to credibly embody what was not experienced (in the play).

Helene Weigel (1900-1971), Austrian-German actress and director of the Berliner Ensemble since 1949, working with Brecht since 1923. 1950 founding member of the GDR Academy of Arts.

Hermann Henselmann (1905-1995), architect who shaped urban development in the GDR in the 50s and 60s. In 1946 director at the University of Civil Engineering in Weimar, from 1949 at the Institute for Civil Engineering of the German Academy of Sciences in Berlin. His works include Karl-Marx-Allee, the Teacher's House and the Congress Hall at Berlin's Alexanderplatz.

Vladimir S. Semyonov (1911-1992),

Soviet diplomat since 1939. From 1946 to 1953 political advisor to the Soviet military administration under Vasily Sokolovsky and Vasily Chuikov. In June 1953 he was,

after the dissolution of the Soviet Control Commission, head of the USSR High Commission in Germany. In September of the same year he was appointed Soviet ambassador to the GDR. From 1978 to 1986 he succeeded Valentin Falin as ambassador of the USSR to the Federal Republic of Germany. His role in the GDR, especially in 1953, is shady. After June 17th, he wanted to have LDPD chairman Hermann Kastner (1886-1957) as deputy prime minister in Ulbricht's place, although he was an agent of Western secret services. The BND spy fled to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1956.

Otto Grotewohl (1894-1964), member of the Reichstag for the SPD in the 1920s, in 1945 chairman of the Central Committee of the SPD and supporter of the unification of the SPD and KPD, from 1946 co-chairman of the SED with Wilhelm Pieck, from 1949 to 1964 Prime Minister.

Brecht's letter dated June 17, 1953 can be viewed in the estate of Walter Ulbricht in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BArch NY 4182/1387) and has the following wording: "Dear Comrade Ulbricht, history will pay its respects to the revolutionary impatience of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. The major discussion with the masses about the pace of socialist construction will lead to a

review and securing of socialist achievements. I feel the need to express to you at this moment my solidarity with the Socialist Unity Party of Germany. Yours, Bertolt Brecht."

Käthe Rühlicke (1922-1992), dramaturge and film and television scientist, at the BE since 1950, assistant director and dramaturge from 1951 to 1956, then chief dramaturge in the Department of Dramatic Art at Deutsches

Television radio, from 1967 to 1982 she worked at the Potsdam University of Film and Television, and from 1971 she was a professor.

Peter Palitzsch (1918-2004), theater director, at the BE from 1949 to 1961, from 1966 acting director at the Staatstheater Stuttgart, later at the Schauspiel Frankfurt, returning to the BE in 1992. Until 1995, joint director with Peter Zadek, Fritz Marquardt, Matthias Langhoff and Heiner Müller.

At the 2nd SED party conference in July 1952, the planned construction of the foundations of socialism was decided, thus ending the phase of anti-fascist-democratic revolution in eastern Germany.

In response to the separate currency reform and the abolition of fixed prices, almost ten million working people in the western zones invested in one

One-day general strike stopped work. It was the first and largest strike in West German history. In Stuttgart – that's why "Stuttgart Incidents" – the US occupying forces brought in tanks.

Erwin Geschonneck (1906-2008),

Actor, KPD member since 1929, forced to leave the country by the Soviet Union in 1938, concentration camp from 1939 to 1945, at the Hamburg Kammerspiele from 1946 to 1948, at the BE since 1949. He was buried not far from the graves of Brecht and Weigel in the Dorotheenstadt cemetery.

Günter Mittag (1926-1994), member of the Politburo from 1966 to 1989. As Central Committee Secretary for Economic Affairs, he was involved in the development of the New Economic System of Planning and Management, which was based on the VI. SED party conference in 1963 was decided as a reform concept. The fathers were Walter

Ulbricht and Erich Apel, active conceptual contributors to this were: Wolfgang Berger, Herbert Wolf, Walter Halbritter and Heinz Koziol. From the 1970s onwards Mittag was almost solely responsible for the GDR's economic policy and was largely responsible for the country's decline.

Peter Hacks (1928-2003), playwright, poet, storyteller and essayist. He founded "socialist classicism" in the 1960s and was probably the most important playwright in the GDR. He fell out of favor in the West when he explicitly welcomed Biermann's expatriation in an article in the Weltbühne in 1976.

Wolfgang Langhoff (1901-1966), actor and director. The Nazis imprisoned him because of his involvement in the KPD. Escape to Switzerland, 1946 director of the German Theater (until 1963, then

Resigned because of a production of the Hacks play "The Worries and the Power"), 1956 President of the GDR Center of the International Theater Institute of UNESCO.

Ernst Busch (1900-1980), singer, actor and director, emigrated since 1933, performed before the International Brigades in Spain, interned in France, extradited to the Gestapo and imprisonment in Brandenburg prison until the end of the war, joined the KPD, at the BE since 1949. Retired from the stage in 1961.

Volker Braun (born 1939), studied philosophy at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig, SED since 1960, from 1965 to 1967 dramaturge at the BE at the invitation of Helene Weigel, since 1972 at the Deutsches Theater. 1988 National Prize of the GDR.

Valentin M. Falin (born 1926), in 1950/51 he was part of the Soviet staff

Control Commission in Germany. Since 1961 he was a member of Khrushchev's advisory staff, and from 1965 he was head of the advisory group of Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei A. Gromyko. From 1971 to 1978 Ambassador of the USSR to the Federal Republic of Germany, 1990/91 Central Committee Secretary, from 1992 to 2000 employee of the Egon Bahrs Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy in Hamburg.

Andrei A. Zhdanov (1896-1948), from 1934 to 1944, Kirov's successor, regional and city secretary of the Leningrad party organization, as a close colleague of Stalin, particularly responsible for culture. The repressive cultural policy named after him (Zhdanovshchina) was directed against writers like Akhmatova, Pasternak and Zoshchenko, directors like Eisenstein and composers like Prokofiev and Shostakovich.

Paul Dessau (1894-1979), composer and conductor, one of the leading film composers since the early 1930s, emigrated in 1933, first to France, then to the USA, met and began working with Brecht and Busch, returned to Berlin in 1948. Member of the Academy of Arts since 1952, vice president from 1957 to 1962. Three times National Prize of the GDR.

Gisela May (born 1924), actress and diseuse who made a name for herself primarily as a Brecht interpreter. At the Deutsches Theater since 1951, at the BE since 1962. There she played Mother Courage from 1978 until she left the ensemble in 1992. Three times National Prize of the GDR, once Federal Cross of Merit 1st Class.

Helmut Baierl (1926-2005), writer and vice president of the GDR Academy of Arts. From 1959 to 1967 dramaturge and author

at BE, party secretary there from 1961 to 1967. Twice National Prize of the GDR.

Anna Seghers (1900-1983), born in Mainz as Anna Reiling, studied history, art history and sinology. First published in the 1920s, 1928 KPD, founding member of the League of Proletarian-Revolutionary Writers. Shortly imprisoned after 1933, her books were banned and burned. Exile in France, then Mexico. Her most famous book was published in 1942 "The Seventh Cross." 1947 return to Germany, joined the SED, 1951 National Prize, from 1952 to 1978 President of the GDR Writers' Association.

Konrad Wolf (1925-1982), son of the writer Friedrich Wolf, exiled in the Soviet Union since 1933, joined the Red Army at 17, was involved in the liberation of Berlin at 19. Studied from 1949 to 1954

He studied at the Gerasimov Institute for Cinematography in Moscow, founded in 1919, then as a film director at DEFA. From 1965 to 1982 he was President of the GDR Academy of Arts.

Fritz Cremer (1906-1993), 1929 KPD,

Acquaintance in exile with Brecht and Weigel, after being a prisoner of war in 1946, returned to Vienna, then Berlin, 1946 SED, worked as a sculptor, graphic artist and draftsman, vice-president of the GDR Academy of Arts. National Prize 1952, 1958 (for Buchenwald Monument), 1972.

Paul Wiens (1922-1982), studied philosophy, arrested in 1943 for undermining military strength. 1947 return to Berlin, editor at Aufbauverlag until 1950, then freelance as a writer, screenwriter and poet, translator of Pablo Neruda, Vladimir Mayakovsky, Nazim

Hikmet. Editor-in-chief of Sinn und Form. Vice President of the Cultural Association of the GDR and from 1961 to 1969 Chairman of the Berlin District Association of the Writers' Association of the GDR. 1959 National Prize.

Horst Sindermann (1915-1990), 1929 Communist Youth Association, 1933 first prison, 1935 sentenced to six years for preparation for high treason, concentration camp until 1945. From 1950 to 1953 editor-in-chief of Freiheit in Halle, then until 1963, head of the agitation department in Central Committee of the SED. From 1963 to 1971 in Hall 1. Secretary of the SED district leadership. From 1971 to 1973 Deputy Prime Minister until 1975. From 1976 to 1989 President of the People's Chamber.

Hartmut König

"So you're the one who always does the songs?"

Hartmut König, born in 1947, graduated from high school with vocational training as a refrigeration system manufacturer. After completing a traineeship at "Neuen Deutschland", he studied journalism at the Karl Marx University in Leipzig from 1967 to 1971 and received his doctorate in 1974. King played along

"Team 4" (later "Thomas Natschinski and his group") from 1964 to 1971 and with the "Oktoberklub" (1966-1973). After working as editor-in-chief

At the International Student Union in Prague he became secretary of the Central Council of the FDJ (1976) and a member of the cultural commission of the Politburo (1979). He had been a member of the SED Central Committee as a candidate since 1981 and as a member from 1986. In 1989 he became Deputy Minister of Culture. After the end of the GDR, he worked for a newspaper publisher in Brandenburg until 2010.

In October 1968 I received a call from State Council member Hans Rodenberg asking me to visit him in the office building. It's about singing among young people.

So I take the subway to Alex and walk towards Marx-Engels-Platz. I missed a train and am late. When I reach Rodenberg's office, I am rightly educated:

"Punctuality is the politeness of kings." The host has a sonorous voice. I know that he was an actor and is married to the director of the Theater of Friendship. He asks interestedly about my little biography. To do this, he tells episodes from his five decades longer life. Exciting, touching stories. At the end he is a member of the State Council and says why he invited me.

Comrade Hartmut! We are happy about how much singing with new freshness is part of youth culture. You are an exponent of this for us. We will hold a State Council meeting on the tasks of culture. And Comrade Ulbricht would like you to be a participant. Otto Gotsche will have an invitation put in your mailbox.

She's already there when I get home. The envelope with the national coat of arms protrudes cockily from the slot; it could have been stolen.

I also start the State Council meeting at the last minute. All participants are already in their seats, the aisles

deserted. I find the conference room by clicking the pointer. Hans Rodenberg greets me angrily. You sit in your seat by "five to" at the latest. And more mildly: Since you are the youngest participant, please take a seat at Comrade Ulbricht's table to eat.

And where is that?

You just follow the others.

The meeting begins.

I will forget most of what is being negotiated. Except Wolfgang Heinz's disturbed face. He is the director of the German Theater and has just met Adolf

Dresen directed a sensational production of Faust I. Now a group led by Alfred Kurella wants to know what modernist interpretation dilemma the great Renaissance man Faust got into at the socialist state theater. The mime and theater director of undisputed rank responds with suppressed anger. Work on a piece is not finished with the premiere. Then there is relaxation and I recognize many famous artists that you would otherwise only see in the newspaper, in DEFA films or on television. During the break I'll look for the cabinet

the two letters in the direction opposite to the flow of conference participants. That's a mistake and, as you guessed it, I'm the last to arrive in the dining room. Walter Ulbricht's table group is already deep in conversation. That means: everyone except him. Culture Minister Klaus Gysi and Anna Seghers, who are closest to him on either side but at a considerable distance from each other, chat with the others in the oval. Walter Ulbricht, on the other hand, looks at an empty chair opposite him. It is placed symmetrically, i.e. at the same distance from its neighboring chairs. This is the free seat that is assigned to me. The

Soup is served.

Walter Ulbricht has a noodle in his beard. You wouldn't suspect a noodle in our number 1's famous facial hair. Loriot's sketch, which will later remind me of the encounter, is not yet on the celluloid. The view is helpfully intimate and eases the tension that any table companion placed in this way would probably have to contend with.

Good afternoon, I say.

"Good afternoon," says Walter Ulbricht, looking up briefly.

After what feels like an eternity he starts the conversation.

»So you're the one who's always the one

makes songs?"

»I also write songs. But we are a whole club of people who write lyrics, compose and sing.«

"Club? Why club? – Surely a choir?"

»Not exactly a choir. Just people who design programs together, write songs and sing. The whole thing is pretty easy."

»It's all well and good. But it's not a club. Let's say it's some kind of choral movement.'

It's not a choral movement either, but the main course is served.

When the waiters have cleared away, Walter Ulbricht continues the conversation: "Me

I have completely different problems, yes!" That goes without saying.

»I have a commission that has nothing to do other than look at where in the world there is world class. If they don't do anything for, say, a week, two or three weeks, that's their problem. But alas, if I find out that there is world class somewhere in the world and she hasn't figured it out, then she'll be on the hook."

Of course, I know the most about the NÖS, the New Economic System of planning and managing the national economy, and can piece together how very successful an appearance on the market and knowledge

international standards and innovations. But I don't yet recognize the subtle dimensions of his thinking behind the carelessly ridiculed tone of our leader.

Dessert has to hurry up. Lotte Ulbricht, who did not allow herself to be seated at our table, has the conference matters firmly in her hands. "Comrade Chairman of the State Council, have you ever looked at the clock?"

Walter Ulbricht says: "We had quite a chat there." Stands up and leads the procession of State Council members and guests back

the meeting room. Klaus Gysi finally knows where the cabinet he is urgently looking for is. There he says: "Well, you've got a prominent table partner."

"He told me about a commission that was looking for world standard for him."

"Yes, he likes commissions like this," says Gysi. That sounds a bit disrespectful.

But I could be wrong.

I met Walter Ulbricht a second time - in May 1971 at the FDJ parliament. Since I study in Leipzig, I am a delegate for this district.

And as for the press that

The obligatory protocol photo of "Comrade Ulbricht among young people from his hometown" is to be taken, FDJ boss Günther Jahn sends me into this delicate group. It was tricky because Walter Ulbricht had recently been relieved of his position as First Secretary of the SED Central Committee. Formally, this happened "at his own request" in order to "give this function to younger hands". In fact, it was a matter of disempowerment, even though Walter Ulbricht was elected chairman of the SED and remained chairman of the State Council. The new first secretary is Erich Honecker. I learn how all this was prepared

later. But around the photo shoot I sense that there is a crackling in the political structure. Nobody wants to burn their mouth.

Günther Jahn says: "Hartmut, the best thing would be if you tell Comrade Ulbricht about the singing movement.

Just get away from your liver.«

"And what if he doesn't want to hear it?"

"Go ahead! About the singing movement!"

The Palace of the Republic has not yet been built. FDJ parliaments - as well as the SED party conferences - take place in the Werner-Seelenbinder-Halle, not far from Friedrichshain. The photo shoot is in one of the

Retreat rooms for the conference presidium have been arranged. Günther Jahn, who would have preferred to remain silent, is of course also in this group and knows that he at least has to break the ice.

"Comrade König wants to tell you something about the FDJ singing movement." Walter Ulbricht looks over, his body slightly bent backwards, his hands crossed over his stomach. The eyes are tired of age and clouded by clouds of water.

»Yes, what should I tell? We are such a club. The October Club..."

"Club? What does that mean – a club? Are you perhaps a choir?"

»No, no choir. Just a club, us

make programs together, write texts and music and sing.«

"Yes, but it's not a club."

"But neither is a choir."

"Well, maybe choral movement would be better?"

"Something like that," I say, because Günther Jahn rolls his eyes. I learn something about long-term memory as I get older and later often ask myself why Walter Ulbricht was so suspicious of the word "club." Was it because of these Petöfi clubs or the Polish, Czech and German varieties that wanted to treat socialism from time to time and who we were not allowed to get near under any circumstances? One

unnecessary worry.

In any case, the day after the photo shoot, my grandmother bought all the daily newspapers available in the GDR capital and cut out the actually identical photographs.

The grandson with Ulbricht. It was right to let the boy join the pioneers, even if late.

It wasn't just Peter Hacks' candid look at the Ulbricht era that embarrassed me. Actually, you could know everything and sharpen your judgment on documents at any time, if you were confident enough to defy the zeitgeist as soon as it began to erase. But I just saw that the zeitgeist

He no longer wanted to name stadiums and chemical plants after living statesmen, so he set out to improve social living conditions and focus more on youth.

My euphoria put a balanced assessment of Walter Ulbricht's political peculiarities and breaks on hold. It contains his German policy, his economic experimental arrangements, his ambivalent relationship to the ideas in Prague and many other things that today's curiosity about early socialist history and left-wing potential again questions. With this unnoticed deficiency I came in

Erich Honecker's era. Because of the economic problems, the housing shortage, the supply shortages, I placed my hopes in the politics of the Eighth Party Congress. There is much to be learned from the history since then. Also this: There is no hope without honest remembering.

From the (previously unpublished) memories of Hartmut König

Erik Neutsch

"Nobody has any intention of interfering with their work."

Erik Neutsch, born in 1931, studied at Leipzig University from 1950 to 1953 after graduating from high school, graduating as a qualified journalist, then cultural and business editor at the Halle daily newspaper "Freiheit" until 1960. Then freelance author. Since 1964 member of the Halle district leadership of the SED (until 1989), from 1974 member of the Academy of Arts. His book "Track

The Stones" (filmed by DEFA in 1965) is one of the most successful in GDR literature. From the cycle of novels published since the 1970s

"Peace in the East" about the history of the GDR was published in one volume in 1974, 1978, 1985 and 1987.

The fifth volume, from which Neutsch made this article available in advance, is not yet finished. The story is about Ulbricht's meeting with writers and painters in the State Council building in January 1971.

It wasn't the first time since Achim wrote his theses

had to defend socialist realism, although he himself did not call it that, spoke of realism, but wanted to see it shaped from the heights of scientific socialism by abolishing bourgeois and generally critical art movements. He viewed it as an artistic method, as a means of not only depicting the world, but also, yes, but above all, of penetrating it and uncovering its most secret parts, turning it outward, making it visible.

He had only recently taken this position, a few weeks ago in January, after his

Surprisingly, a letter had been delivered outside the post office with the news that he would be taking part in a discussion with Walter Ulbricht about art and literature in Berlin.



He was also surprised by this because Walter Ulbricht, since according to the text the conversation was intended to clarify the cultural policy tasks of the party congress, had not signed the invitation as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED, but as Chairman of the State Council of the GDR, even though he was both, the highest functions in the country, united in personal union. There was nothing left for him at the academy institute

There was no other choice than to take another day or two off work, which he had to be granted because it was a social activity, but which was embarrassing and stressful for his colleagues because of the hours lost in the laboratory.

How much useful time with the Piophilids<sup>29</sup> he thought he might lose if nothing good came of the discussion about art and literature. However, he couldn't refuse the invitation; that was out of the question, it was too ambitious.

So he drove to Berlin in the morning with the express train from Eisenach, shortly before ten o'clock from Halle, stopping only in Bitterfeld, Wittenberg and at Schönefeld Airport, arriving in Schöneeweide around 1 p.m., continuing from there with the S-Bahn via Ostkreuz to Alexanderplatz, change to the subway to Hausvogteiplatz station. This route was familiar to him because he had already used it several times when dealing with the Academy of Sciences, whose headquarters were nearby, and according to the city map it seemed to him to be the most convenient this time too. It only took a few minutes to walk from Hausvogteiplatz

Along Oberwallstrasse, past the ruins of the Werder Church and the Central Committee House, over the Spree Canal Bridge, until his view opened up to the Museum Island and the cathedral at Marx-Engels-Platz. Just half a turn to the right and the State Council building rose up in front of him. He stood in front of the portal of the former royal palace, which was carved into the reddish porphyry and which, with its three-story height, seemed extremely monumental, especially if, like Achim, you are ideally, i.e. in Knowing all this, added that from his balcony, which was once the

In the pleasure garden wing of the bombed Hohenzollern Palace, on November 9, 1918, Karl Liebknecht had given his revolutionary speech to the workers of Berlin, the soldiers' councils and red sailors, to create a "new state order, an order of peace, happiness and freedom."

He climbed the wide steps of the stairs, feeling a little unsettled when he had to pass the two guards in front of the portal in a sparkling dress uniform, with a steel helmet, white gloves and a submachine gun crossed in front of his chest, because he found their presence,

Displayed in this rigid posture like mannequins, so that it seemed as if they didn't even bat an eyelash, somehow out of date, operetta-like. He would have liked to greet her with a handshake and ask, well, how are you, buddy, but he just nodded briefly, his gesture went unrequited, and then he entered the building for the first time.

Inside, where he was welcomed by a very high, light-flooded vestibule, a glass painting that stretched across all floors and radiated in all colors, a relatively unadorned table had been moved to the side, at which two friendly women sat in one

simple clothing adapted to the style of the house, costumes with powder blue jackets and skirts, asked him to show his invitation and showed him the way to the conference room, on the red carpeted stairs one floor higher, on the left, the doors were open, in You can also have a snack in a room next door. There is still time.

People gathered. Two people, both painters, whom Achim knew by name and occasional illustrations of their works, had already arrived before him, were eating sandwiches and drinking coffee, he introduced himself to them,

hot stone cutters, saw on their faces that they didn't know what to do with him, said a few words, and then they had to shake hands with others who were now arriving one by one, once for a whole group.

Some hugged each other when they bumped into someone they obviously hadn't seen in a while. That's what happened to the sculptor Fritz Cremer in the hustle and bustle that followed when he was suddenly confronted by a man from Leipzig, in his mid-fifties with a fringe of hair and a hooked nose, who he didn't seem to remember straight away, because, close to Achim's side, he asked him several times after his name, easily also saying the

placed a flat hand behind his ear. Werner Diligent, the man replied, at least it sounded like Werner and Diligent.

Around forty men and women must have been invited, half writers and half painters, and three or four other people from the cultural sector, as it became clear after they were invited into the club room and sat down on upholstered chairs around loosely arranged tables for four. Some faces seemed familiar to Achim from magazines and television programs. He noticed Erwin Strittmatter, Eduard Claudius, the Spanish fighter, and Dieter Noll, his "Adventures of Werner Holt" he

had devoured, and now at the latest he realized that he was in a circle that could well have been considered representative of literature and fine art in the Republic.

Anna Seghers, whom he had admired since his youth, ever since he read the "Seventh Cross," appeared a little late, and Alexander Abusch, to whom he owed a great moment of his thinking through "The Wrong Way of a Nation," immediately stood up and offered her his Chair so that she could be as close as possible to the presidium at the long table covered with a white cloth. But before she sat down,

She looked across the hall, blinked her eyes, found the poet Demant just two seats behind her and greeted him with an almost demonstrative friendliness, as Achim thought he noticed.

At three o'clock sharp, the specified time, Walter Ulbricht appeared, accompanied by a few men, the secretaries of the Politburo Paul Verner and Kurt Hager, the currently acting Minister for Culture, Klaus Gysi, the member of the State Council Hans Rodenberg, who has the reputation of being a veteran as a red actor and who later became director of several times

respected theaters, even in Vienna and Zurich, and Otto Gotsche, Ulbricht's secretary in the State Council, himself a writer, author of several novels about the workers' movement, whom Achim already knew from meetings at the publishing house that published both of their books. Achim was unable to remember the names and functions of any more people who, after they had all stood up from their seats when Walter Ulbricht entered the room, were asked to sit down again. He had joined them from the very beginning of his being here, because he had the customs

not yet learned at a state reception, applauded with the others, assumed a serious face and at the same time shared a wink with the younger writer at his table. Now he wanted to pay attention and pay attention to every word.

It was also the first time that he was so close to the first man in the state, and that alone made him excited about what was to come. Achim watched him, and since he was sitting on the left side at one of the front tables, the room was spread out in front of him and he could therefore also see the board of the presidium

was made easy. Walter Ulbricht, with a packet of white paper in front of him, apparently manuscript pages of his speech, then, after a brief greeting and introduction from his secretary, picked up one of the sheets and explained his thoughts. It was astonishing that he had not first comprehensively explained the situation in the city world politics, although it touched on the GDR's position in it, but apparently left it up to everyone to draw their own conclusions. He got to the point, he talked about the party conference, which would be history in six months and hopefully a good one, for the people in this country, for their well-being, because - and Achim, who is often too comfortable

was to take notes during presentations, at this point he picked up a ballpoint pen and took notes - because "the socialist German nation state not only separates itself from the NATO state of the Federal Republic as an independent, sovereign state; At the same time, socialist national culture is developing more and more in the GDR.

In view of this polarization of the fundamentally opposing cultures that prevail in the GDR and the FRG, it is all the more important that the writers and artists of our republic familiarize themselves with the ethical maxims set by the

socialist society.

The next day, Achim also found these formulations in the New Germany, the newspaper of the Central Committee of the SED, so that they, without further ado, were expressed in such harsh terms and were apparently also, if not agreed upon with him, the editor responsible for the reporting The postulate anticipated by the party congress must have appeared. It suited Achim; he had spent his entire life trying to distance himself from what was always held against him as middle-class morality outside of his parents' home

to solve, yes, not even to let it get to you and to follow the paths of your father and mother.

There were times when he had not succeeded, at the end of the war and afterwards, under the influence of hypocritical agitators, even later, in the winters of hunger, but how glad he had been to have freed himself from it. Art and literature, whether classical or bourgeois-critical, whatever their form, even romanticism, as soon as it was purified by Marxist thought and could be experienced, lifted in the spirit of Hegel, had the greatest merit in this. And that's why he was now grateful to Walter Ulbricht

did not dance as if on hot coals, but called a spade a spade, the expectations that both the state and the party should impose on writers and artists.

He stood at the white-covered table, in the middle of which, behind him, the light brown wood-panelled wall, up to the middle height in a zigzag structure and with high window bays, through whose panes the now dim light of the rain-covered January day fell. He spoke calmly, supported only by brief movements of his hands, and turned his face several times towards the men

Presidium, the officials, the guests in the hall, the artists he had invited, as if he also had to convince them of what he said. It was only much later that Achim found out that Ulbricht had not actually arranged this meeting with the Politburo, as was usual, which explained why he had called the writers and painters to the State Council and not to the house of the Central Committee. especially since, as it now became clear, non-party artists and those from other parties were also present. His voice, Achim found, with the fillers of the questioning yeses at the end of each

sentences, initially sounded very bright in the tone that one was used to from him, but over time it took on a more muted, rougher tone.

The art of the writer, he said, consists in connecting himself so closely with the people that he recognizes the new phenomena of social development and strives to give them literary form, with all the conflicts that arise. But that requires their intellectual

penetration, the knowledge of their further movement in contradictions, so that our socialist construction does not appear as a work of technology - that too, yes? – but above all perceived as a human work

becomes. It presupposes the insight, the will and the effort to integrate oneself through art into the revolutionary changes towards a society in which the exploitation of man by man is eliminated and a life in peace is possible for everyone - for everyone will be. A painter from Halle, who a decade ago, as Achim had followed in the press, had been exposed to the most violent attacks for allegedly adopting formalist stylistic elements from Léger and Picasso in his paintings, which were often intended as homages to people in historical processes, took action after the discussion

was asked to speak first. Achim thought it was bold of him, but believed that the man was just pushing his way forward, especially since he was eulogizing the last plenum of the Central Committee 14th of the electoral term, because he wanted to make people forget the criticism of his painting style and - what was inevitable - of himself. But he soon heard that this couldn't be the reason, as he had only recently been appointed vice president of the Association of Visual Artists, meaning he had emerged from the hodgepodge of ignorance, resentment and mischief relatively unscathed. But then he started talking about the synthesis of

Talking about architecture and painting in future new buildings, both in cities and in industry, referred to the large-scale folk mythical works of the Mexicans Rivera and Siqueiros, and this, as we knew, was not a universally praiseworthy topic. His tone sometimes even increased in severity; he argued about showing the ideals of the working class not only in the design of their environment, their private life, so to speak in the genre paintings, which were somewhat improved compared to the Biedermeier style, but also in monumental art.

With all the progress that has now been made in the unification of

architecture and fine art, the solution to the most important task is still to come, namely to create really great works of which one could say that in them the socialist state consciousness and the future-bearing power of the working class have found valid artistic expression.

The consultation continued, and Achim sometimes had difficulty following it; he always felt distracted, as it was not uncommon for him to be forced to think about the meaning of some sentences in the lectures if he wanted to fully understand them thus the connection to the

missed a continuation of what was said. The speeches, he found, were sometimes so exaggerated that he would have liked to immediately translate them into simpler German. This was the case with the painter from Halle, for example, and he wondered for a long time what he had to do with the » "Genre pictures of the honest men" could have meant.

Achim was more of a visual than an acoustic type anyway, which is what one says of people whose attention is better captured by their eyes than by their ears, and so he picked up a pen here and there, jotted down this and that and made a mental note , at home in peace about it

to read: presumptive partisans! Suddenly he started. This one

He had come across the term before, and when he heard the word "presumptive" he paused, followed it up because he didn't know it, looked for it in the dictionary because he didn't know how to spell it either. He discovered that it meant something like "probably," that is, "probably assumed," and when used in connection with writers, as it was then and now, it took on an almost threatening sound: writers are presumptive partisans.

Alfred Kurella, once an emigrant in Soviet exile, had just met

most recently the long-time head of the cultural commission at the Central Committee, used this term, and a few weeks ago it was the minister responsible for publishing and book production who spoke about the publication of the print-ready manuscript of Achim's novel

"Shadows of the Rising Light" had been argued. Longer excerpts had now appeared in literary magazines so that readers and critics alike could get an idea of the form and content of the text. However, the ministry's decision to release the book for printing failed

had to wait by constantly raising new objections. At one point people took exception to the design of the 17th century.

June 1953, another time, so-called reviewers who remained strictly in the background complained that the novel had an overall sad mood, and finally he was also asked to make deletions and changes, which he strictly refused. Because of what he saw as his very hesitant approach to the efforts of authors, he also wrote a letter to the State Council at the end of November and for the attention (or one should say: for the eyes) of the

Chairman, Walter Ulbrichts.

Now he was wrestling with himself as to whether he should speak up to report it. The chairman's office had replied to him, politely and before the legal deadline, so that he found the envelope with the state coat of arms in the mailbox under the Christmas mail, but only informed him that his complaint had been forwarded to the Ministry of Culture for processing. But if he spoke up now, it was

clear to him that he could not stop at this, his personal concern. More than that, he would have to start with something much bigger, with

Higher in the political and spiritual sense, and so he was just thinking about it, looking for the clever beginning when Ulbricht's smoky, tenor voice tore him out of his thoughts.

"Don't be afraid," he said,

»Nobody has the intention, yes?, of interfering with your artistic work, of giving you instructions on our part, the state and the party, when it comes to questions of literary or artistic design. That, yes? We leave that to the artists themselves.«

He paused, interrupted himself briefly, and then his speech appeared to be a retort

was intended to be a contribution that Achim, who was already busy with his own comments, had only briefly noticed, he was probably looking for a style of reply that avoided any sharpness. "Why do I say that, dear friends and comrades?" Now he seemed to be sure and turned to the assembled with a full chest, dressed in a dark blue jacket, like the others at the executive table, with a white shirt and red-striped tie. »What we will not allow, however, is any kind of denigration of our working people, the pioneers of our social construction. That already worries them

Western press, and you don't have to do that too. But the working class and its allies are the supporting forces that ensure that here, on the soil of the GDR, the banks and capital concerns were driven to hell and that public ownership was able to emerge, which forms the economic basis of all our work, the politics of peace and prosperity for working people. We have smoked out the hotbeds of warmongering and genocide, the steel vaults of profit and the nobility in the countryside. But, comrades and friends, our enemies will never forgive us for that.

Our party knows them."

He looked around the presidium and received a vigorous nod of approval. »We have known about them for over a century, at least since Marx and Engels. Our party of scientific socialism was born in the struggle against them. And that's why I ask you to trust our experiences. As long as there is still life in the rotting body of capitalism, it will try to stop the triumph of socialism in the German Democratic Republic, to recapture its expropriated factories and goods, the social and

"To erase intellectual achievements in our country and to expose our ideals and our revolutionary honor to shame and persecution, which is already happening in the West all the time."

He interrupted himself again, coughed and held a handkerchief to his mouth. It was snow-white, and as he wiped it over his chin and gray beard, Achim noticed the size of Walter Ulbricht's hands, so he thought they might actually be those of a construction worker, a carpenter, as we knew about him .

"Please listen to us," he said now, after briefly approaching again

had come to speak, which is why the party could not tolerate exaggerating the shaping of conflicts in the country to such an extent that its officials appeared to be fools or jokers. »Of course there are also comrades who are not up to their tasks. However, you should also take this seriously and design your own aesthetic. However, for us this is not about literature, I emphasize: not about literature. Every line you write is still about the struggle for existence between two diametrically opposed social systems!" Achim wouldn't have known what it was about

There would have been objections to this fundamental allocation of locations for art and literature, he approved of it. However, it was absolutely not allowed to be applied in general to practical work, but rather examined and judged on the individual case of a work and more insightfully and respectfully than was currently done with his manuscript.

The debate had been reopened after Walter Ulbricht's words, and Achim wanted to join in. He was just wondering what form of address he should choose (the participants in front of him had mostly used a respectful "you" in connection with comrade, "Comrade Ulbricht, you," others had

also called him "Mr. Chairman", still others "Comrade First Secretary" and some, for example Fritz Selbmann, former Minister for Heavy Industry, who had now also published a few novels after his replacement, simply addressed him by his first name, "Walter, you..."). However, since the consultation took place in the run-up to the eighth party congress, although in the rooms of the State Council, Achim believed that he would not be wrong if he used the word "comrade". He raised his hand, was called up, went behind his chair and brought his criticism to the publishing house's headquarters

Ministry of Culture by discussing the fate of his novel

"Shadows of the Rising Light" referred to this eternal back and forth with sometimes malicious insinuations.

"I'm not willing," he said, "to be suspected of being a presumptive partisan, as happened again ..."

"But that was meant as a metaphor, dear young friend," came an interjection, "in general terms."

"Despite it. I find it an insult. Not for me, but for my work. You should be very specific and ask: Partisan against whom? Like others before us against princes

and other enemies of the people? Yes. But against socialists, against my brothers? No!"

He tried to contain his excitement and moderate his tone.

»You know, I don't have to write stories and novels. I am a biologist, geneticist, and have enough to do in my laboratories. But when I dedicate myself to the stories of people in our country and in our time, and make an effort to pursue their fates through literature, it is because I don't want to research *Drosophila*, the fruit fly, in a glass box, but myself.

How do others live and how do I live?

And my texts certainly don't have to be printed. But if so, then they should belong to me, they should only say what is mine..."

He noticed how Walter Ulbricht suddenly leaned over the table and turned to Klaus Gysi, the Minister of Culture, who was sitting two chairs away from him, to whisper something to him. Gysi then nodded several times, apparently obediently, and whispered an answer behind her hand.

»I agree with you, Comrade Ulbricht, when you urge us to identify and shape the human conflicts in our society. But if we do it, we have to

to let us speak so that readers can hear us. You have to put an end to this hiccup, as in my case with the manuscript

'Shadows of the Rising Light,' this cycle between the Ministry of Culture and the State Council and back again, as if it were a circular from office to office, but not literature."

Achim paused, and had he said enough and made himself understood? He believed it. Now all he had to do was find closure.

"Thank you for your attention," he added, seeming to address everyone present, and sat down.

Somehow, even though he couldn't have put his finger on it, he could tell from the faces that his appearance had not been without effect.

Some looked astonished, some, although hesitant, clapped, and the young poet at his table held up the thumb of his right hand in appreciation and sent over a quiet Bravo.

Immediately afterwards, however, when Achim had barely sat down, Walter Ulbricht spoke. Although he straightened himself, he remained seated and spoke without waiting for several contributions in the pack, as he had done before. "Now don't think, Comrade Steinhauer, that you mean that to me

get away quickly. I have read the passages from your new novel as far as they were printed in the ND 30. And I received your letter in which you complain about the way the publishing headquarters handled your manuscript. You just repeated it..." Achim felt a heat rising within him. In such a circle, at odds with the first man in the state - that didn't leave him cold, as is often said about such situations.

"I also know your 'Grimm', dear Comrade Steinhauer, and I already thought about him: he could and had to write a book like that,

Why not. Maybe a second one in this direction. However, I would have my doubts about a third one

..."

"But, Comrade Ulbricht, 'Shadows of the Rising Light' would only be my second book."

The assembly in the hall seemed to freeze. People looked at him, people looked at Ulbricht. It was as if there was a groan, because apparently most of the writers and artists had found his retort, which had only been blurted out in his eagerness, to be cold and presumptuous, even insolent. Because until this afternoon hardly anyone had any of it

knew about him, not about his literary existence, one or the other might have liked his story

"The Grimm" took note, but how the author Achim Steinhauer presented himself as a person was only known to a few people, Otto Gotsche, Bernhard Seeger through his publisher, Erwin Strittmatter and - Ende.

"Yes, yes," he now heard Walter Ulbricht saying, "calm down, okay? I have already agreed with Comrade Gysi to finally get down to business, to put the manuscript of your novel through its paces, so that it is not damaged, and to give him permission to print it

To give. Agreed?" What else could he be!

The deliberations in the State Council did not fail to have an effect on Achim Steinhauer's thoughts and actions. He felt confirmed and so, as we believed we could observe, new forces grew within him that inspired his creative actions.

Both in research, in searching through matter for its origins, in detecting the most hidden DNA structures, as well as in discovering the most secret interpersonal relationships with the aim of making them recognizable through poetry. It had twenty years

needed, from the valley floor on the mountain of the University of Leipzig to the peaks of science and literature, so that he could now say of himself: What I dared to do with my senses, I achieved.

In this mood, we remember, he danced across the highway, faster, faster and faster, and yet he wanted to get back on the ground again, with his mother, in his parents' house, in the town from which he had left, to bring the world into your soul, and always with the promise behind your forehead and the courage of the small, fist-sized muscle in your chest, never, ever admitting your origins

forget.

Piophilids are so-called cheese flies, the subject of research by the hero Achim Steinhauer.

New German Literature (NDL), a literary magazine published monthly since 1952 and published by the GDR Writers' Association with a circulation of between

8,000 and 10,000 copies, in addition to meaning and form, an important communication and publication organ for cultural workers in the GDR.

Hermann Kant

A strange encounter

Hermann Kant, born in 1926, apprenticed as an electrician in Parchim, Polish prisoner of war, attended the Antifa school, returned to the GDR in 1949. High school diploma at the Workers' and Farmers' Faculty in Greifswald in 1952, studied German at the Humboldt University from 1952 to 1956. After working as editor-in-chief of a student magazine, he became a freelance author. Between 1974 and 1979 he was a member of the SED district leadership

Berlin, from 1981 to 1990 member of the People's Chamber of the GDR, from 1986 to 1989 member of the SED Central Committee. From 1978 to 1990 President of the GDR Writers' Association. In 1992 he resigned from the Academy of Arts, of which he had been a member since 1978, and from PEN (since 1964). Two-time national prize winner of the GDR.

Unlike Peter Hacks (who was perhaps just having fun with it), I didn't have much use for Walter Ulbricht. He was just there when I came back from the war. For the socialist spirit we had Pieck, for the higher rhetoric there was Grotewohl, and Ulbricht held that

Apparatus in operation. For me he was an uncomfortable person to respect and, as a leading comrade, hardly avoidable. Although someone like Adenauer certainly deserved someone like him, I didn't see why the supporters of his socialist cause had to fear him. But that's what it comes down to when I have to describe my relationship with him.

I learned in captivity that things could be different between top and bottom. My God, how did our Polish-Jewish-Communist teachers and their German partner treat us!

Strict, yes, relentless sometimes, but

intent on healing and not destruction. These people, named Edda Tennenbam and Justyna Sierp and Karl Wloch, were followed by a superior who was known to have the most powerful of all superiors.

No, well-being did not arise when the First Secretary, the General Secretary or the Chairman of the State Council called.

Even if a positive result wasn't completely out of the question.

More than twenty years ago, in a book called End Credits, I described a process that deserves to be presented again in this context:

Walter Ulbricht, chairman of the State Council and no longer general secretary of the party, invited people to something that had a new name and did not otherwise correspond to what was known about this man - after all the groundbreaking instructions, it was now supposed to be a consultation of ideas. An idea consultation with artists. A meeting at the top of the state that the top of the party had no idea about until just now. An unheard of event.

It was correspondingly nervous; the artists' associations sought to find out from the Central Committee what awaited them; The Central Committee, a rare occurrence, approached us for an expert opinion. But all we knew was that we were one

Management report expected.

Anna Seghers was sick, or called it that; I had to give a lecture. I no longer know what Ulbricht's ideas consisted of, which he then discussed with himself in our ears.

I was too busy trying to get my own situation back on its feet. I provided a factual description of our association's work; It didn't bother me that it seemed to bother the few Politburo members who were there as if to observe. The stubborn old people no longer cared, their expressions said, and immediately afterwards their angry ones wanted me

Faces mean I should shut up about my personal stuff. But I said that I couldn't very well describe the situation in the association as orderly and then mention the disorder in my own writing. I am the author of a book that was printed years ago but not published and which I know cannot cause any harm. However, it is treated as if the opposite were to be expected and it is really causing me harm. For just as it alienated friends from me, strangers sought to make friends to me in its sign. What I like least about is the situation

the speechlessness into which the parties involved in the book had entered.

The idea consultation also initially went into a state of speechlessness. Meetings of this nature were intended to identify successes and not obstacles. Especially not obstacles that the organizer himself had set up. He just wanted to show that he was still there. And because Honecker's emissaries were not very interested in this very evidence, they did not like my contribution to Ulbricht's revival. With such conflicting ideas, good advice seemed expensive, so Otto whispered

Gotsche, secretary of the State Council and author, put something in the ear of the Chairman of the State Council, and he announced a break.

The anteroom of the assembly hall was also a hall, the huge part of the huge staircase in the State Council Building; the idea consultants almost lost themselves in him. On the left side of the window, fellow artists were crowded in heated conversation, on the

right side of the window were snarled emissaries from the Politburo with their staff, in the door between the hall and the hallway Ulbricht was discussing with Gotsche, and far away from everyone in the corner by the elevator I had

Positioned. Once again the arrangement of the Hager group with which the imprint period began: The sinner alone, he probably stank; Sympathy only reached him through a look. –

Ulbricht and Gotsche started moving towards the middle of the large room, stopped again, it became quiet, Ulbricht said something, Gotsche stepped back, Ulbricht made a half turn and walked heavily across the parquet diagonal in my direction. With a hand signal he encouraged me to come towards him, with another he seemed to keep the idea consultants away from us. He came very close

approached me, looked at my party badge as if he had never seen such an exotic thing before, and spoke to me in his well-known and yet incredible Saxon: "Yes, Mr. Kant!"

The Chairman of the State Council of the German Democratic Republic, from whom I have a saving or at least explanatory word on the matter

"Imprint" was waiting for me, looked at me for a long time, as if he was checking how far he could confide in me, and then he asked: "Do you know why the friends are cooperating with us?"

Perhaps under different circumstances I could have made assumptions

But the topic of why the Soviet Union was in cooperation with the GDR was not touched upon with a single syllable in the ideas discussion, and I was probably too focused on my subject. So I said, no, I don't know.

The comrade, who had been my leading comrade for so long now, including in questions of German-Soviet friendship, moved a little closer to me, smiled slyly and said in a very Saxon way: "Because I care, newah? Because I care!"

It will be clear to me and I will have nodded, and the chairman probably showed me that

a man with whom good ideas could be easily consulted, because in a confidential tone between confidants he added quietly and triumphantly: "Those who don't have anything, I don't cooperate with them!"

Because I understood this without any difficulty, I certainly appeared relaxed and showed the distant observers that things were good between the chairman and me. It was Dieter Noll who, well ahead of the others, set off for the friendly climate zone, and they all heard the chairman say what he had to say to me about cooperation: "At the last trade fair in Leipzig you me that

The latest developments were demonstrated and I said: cover everything! Do you know why, Mr. Kant? Well, isn't there, there are not only enemy spies, there are friendly ones too, aren't there!"

General laughter, a general continuation of the discussion of ideas, a few more meaningless reports, then a final word from the great scholar, which, as far as I know, was actually the last of all his final words.

Once again we learned about the leading role, the responsibility of art, engineers of the human soul, the Bitterfeld Way and the superiority of the Berliners over the New York garbage disposal. Of the

We didn't hear any more about the secrets of cooperation between socialist partners, but I was given credit for my part in the idea consultation. Comrade (now comrade again) Kant, said Comrade Ulbricht, helped to find a main link in the chain by saying that he did not mean any harm with his book. However, the chairman continued, this was not the whole truth. The whole truth is that the socialist artist should not only not do any harm with his art, but above all be useful.

I have no idea how things ended. Uncomplicated and without any consequences for the evening. The old man

closed the State Council behind us, the young men from the Politburo threw themselves into their chaikas with sardonic expressions; I threw myself, aghast, into my wife's arms and let her know why our friends were goobbering with us; The next day Höpcke wrote a full-page report in New Germany, and the passage

"But that's not the whole truth," he said verbatim; The Aufbau Verlag/Rütten & Loening contacted us around midday to see if we wanted to talk about the novel.

For decades I have heard about the one-on-one conversation with Walter Ulbricht, with a hundred pairs of eyes watching,

told and always thought that the older gentleman's confusion was possible. But what - here an idea entirely from the spirit of a later personality cult - if he knew that he wasn't allowed to commit himself, but could make a difference if he spoke to me in a familiar and friendly manner - about whatever?

Karl-Heinz Schulmeister

Supporter of science and culture

Karl-Heinz Schulmeister, born in 1925, teacher's son, high school diploma, 1946 SED, Cultural Association in 1946, consultant in the state government of Mecklenburg, until 1952 state secretary of the Cultural Association of Mecklenburg and member of the state parliament. 1955 Federal Secretary of the Cultural Association. From 1958 to 1990

Member of the People's Chamber, since 1965 –

in succession to Erich Wendt - Chairman of the Cultural Association faction. Distance learning history at Humboldt University, doctorate in 1974, professor at Humboldt University in 1982, first degree in 1981. Vice President of the Cultural Association elected. Retired since 1990.

I

It was in Halle in 1957 where I experienced Walter Ulbricht as a courageous conversation partner with scientists. Halle was the location of one of the oldest scientific academies, the Leopoldina. Some of the leading bourgeois scientists working there at the time were working there

found it difficult to accept the new state power. Under the direction of Prof. Dr. Mothes consisted of a so-called "Spiritus Circle", which behaved negatively, something we in the Kulturbund didn't know at the time. As Federal Secretary of this organization, I took part in this large meeting. Ulbricht went into the lion's den, spoke plainly, explained the scientific policy of the workers' and farmers' state and warned of enemy activities. The openness and consistency and courage with which the workers' leader spoke to the intelligentsia elite was extremely impressive to me!

Aware of the new power, he asked for trust and patience and made it clear that for various reasons - including lack - not all legitimate wishes and demands could be met.

These intelligence conferences, which the Cultural Association held in various metropolitan areas, were successful examples of the inclusion of large sections of humanistic cultural workers.

Along with Johannes R. Becher, Ulbricht was undoubtedly the inspiration behind these initiatives. He surprised many because, as a real politician, he had excellent knowledge of the situation and mood of the intellectuals

was informed. People were also always amazed at his general education and specialist knowledge.

This is how he convinced many people. and a relationship of trust developed between leading scientific institutions, the academies and universities, and the government.

There were also leading scientists such as the Nobel Prize winner Prof. Dr. Gustav Hertz, the physicist Prof. Max Volmer, the chemist Prof. Peter Adolf Thiessen, Prof. Manfred von Ardenne, Prof.

Baade, Frühauf, Steenbeck, Stubbe and others are trustworthy and often personal

Contacts.

There was great agreement between Walter Ulbricht and many scientists when it came to the development of basic research and the promotion of certain areas of research. They also wanted to constantly find new ways to effectively transfer research results into commercial practice, to overcome backlogs in technical areas and to meet the new major challenges to master the scientific and technical revolution.

Walter Ulbricht also showed

Willingness to explore new paths and experiment. He was a courageous organizer and promoter of science and technology.

Ulbricht's era was a time of rise in scientific potential. The history of the Academy of Sciences and the Research Council of the GDR provides enough information about this! One of the strengths of Walter Ulbricht's personality certainly lay in these areas, as quite a few scientists report on this in their memoirs.

II.

The representatives of the workers' movement Wilhelm Pieck, Otto

Grotewohl and Walter Ulbricht greatly promoted the development of culture and the arts. Like no other politician, Ulbricht felt called upon to carry out these tasks with all the rigor. This process began with the cultural regulations of the German Economic Commission and led to cultural institutions being rebuilt to their former glory after the war. Apartments and small houses were also created for many artists and their material life was secured by publishing houses and artistic institutions. Many returnees from emigration, the most well-known anti-fascist ones

Artists and writers settled in East Germany and the GDR. An unprecedented rise, a renaissance of humanistic culture began in the East, but the West faded, as many historians had to admit. The well-known DEFA films, the Brecht ensemble, the Felsenstein Theater, the opera houses in Berlin, Leipzig, Dresden, the Academy of Arts, the many cultural centers, including in the countryside, the public libraries, the many folk art ensembles, the workers' festival, the major art exhibitions in Dresden, the work of the trade unions,

Kulturbund and the Volksbühne, the rich book production and publishing development and much more bear witness to the fact that culture was at home here.

But Walter Ulbricht wanted even more: a new art should be created, culture should become the center of life or part of life! Where workplaces with new companies or new development areas were created, culture should also find a home. Workers and farmers should finally have access to culture. Culture and education for all citizens was the task of the state, as the constitution also stipulated.



This development probably did not happen quickly enough for Ulbricht, and the arts were not yet sufficiently prepared for it. That's why Ulbricht took the initiative for the Bitterfeld cultural conferences, which ushered in a process of democratic reform, a real cultural revolution. There were exaggerations and errors, but in the end there were considerable successes and cultural life developed tirelessly!

Many citizens discovered the visual arts, others discovered reading, theater or amateur art. This is how a desire for culture and the arts arose! The festivals in the companies

Village festivals and cultural days in town and country produced many talents. Today this development seems to me like a dream of a different, better world, which we partly created in the GDR. Today everything is increasingly privatized and money ultimately determines culture. As a result, more and more values and humanistic ideals are falling by the wayside.

Fifty years ago, many artists followed the party's call. They explored life, looked for the new man and found many socialist heroes, great people. But in doing so, according to our teachings, they discovered an infinite number

Contradictions that socialist life showed in its expressions. This created a great wealth of new art, pictures and compositions, books and films, television plays and theater productions, etc. There are quite a few of them that still move people today.

At that time there was a bitter class struggle between East and West, between two different world systems. This is how the 11th meeting of the SED Central Committee came about, where unfortunately films like

"Trace of the Stones" and "I am the Rabbit," among others, were banned. Some of the filmmakers wanted that

To help overcome contradictions, wanted the best for socialism, but here mistakes were made that damaged the reputation of the party and the state and had consequences that were not in keeping with socialism. Quite a few artists were disappointed, got into trouble, and some left.

Unfortunately, Walter Ulbricht and the Politburo did not have the necessary patience and tolerance. Ulbricht's reputation was also damaged. Nevertheless, the fact remains that he was a great supporter of culture, because it was during his time that the rich cultural landscape of the GDR emerged, around which we are

envied by many in the world.

III.

Did Walter Ulbricht maintain friendly relationships with artists? Surely!

He had many contacts with anti-fascist cultural workers, which arose from the common fight against fascism and war. It is also clear that he is one of the intellectuals of his generation, e.g. B. had excellent connections with Johannes R. Becher and Willi Bredel, Friedrich Wolf and Erich Weinert. It's only natural that friendships are formed primarily through shared experiences and struggles.

An important friendship connected

Walter Ulbricht with Johannes R. Becher. This lasted over three decades and began in 1933 in emigration to Moscow. When the President of the Cultural Association, Max Burghardt, presented Walter Ulbricht with the Johannes R. Becher Medal in 1961 and we sat together in a small circle, Ulbricht chatted about this close bond. He emphasized that they had been very fruitful and creative relationships, that they had often had very fruitful debates and that they had gained extremely important insights from each other. The poet would get a lot out of the politician and, conversely, the politician

Learned to be a poet. Ulbricht told us that Becher - like many other artists - was a very sensitive and sensitive person who often sought advice from him.

On the other hand, the writer and cultural politician dealt extremely intensively with German intellectual-historical development in order to draw lessons from it for the reconstruction of a different, humanistic Germany.

Many of the author's writings - his poetry about Germany, his "German Doctrine" - from the 30s and 40s, among other things, would testify to this. Johannes R. Becher gave him - his friend

Walter - demonstrated the important role of German classical music. Questions of education and culture would also have to play a special strategic role in the future Germany. When developing appropriate programs for a democratic renewal of the German fatherland, there would have been only agreement and common ground. After the liberation from fascism in May 1945, Johannes R. Becher was the courageous pioneer who influenced many middle-class scientists and artists. His work is a great blessing for us, for the labor movement

been.

Becher also achieved great achievements in the 1950s. The establishment of the Ministry of Culture of the GDR - with predominantly the best experts from all artistic areas - was also primarily the work of Johannes R. Becher. Ulbricht made it a point to state that he had given the poet every possible help and support.

It is also known that Ulbricht supported Willi Bredel, who was working in Paris in 1934, when he wanted to set up a publishing house there in order to give anti-fascist literature a home. Walter Ulbricht has

There in Paris, in the interests of popular front politics, he also sought to collaborate with Heinrich Mann and other anti-fascists from Europe's literary elite.

Unfortunately, many facts about how Ulbricht appeared as a promoter of culture have not been sufficiently researched. However, such facts are important in order to expose the falsifications and one-sidedness of Ulbricht's portrayal in primarily West German historiography.

IV.

There are personal memories of Walter Ulbricht that I still don't have to this day

I have forgotten those who occupied and encouraged me at the time. These were the consultations that Ulbricht held with us - the heads of the committees of the People's Chamber of the GDR - in Berlin in the State Council and in Dölln, and where he called on us to take decisive steps towards the development of socialist democracy. We should monitor and question ministers more and make suggestions for the planning of state bodies.

In fact, there were open debates and critical assessments with the ministers in the Culture Committee, and the factual work of the committee was ultimately influenced by our opinion-forming

Ministry influences and improves. No matter whether it was the training of young artists, the preservation of monuments or urban design. There were enough proven experts among the parliamentary groups. It was good for us to know that Ulbricht promoted this process of democratization.

The meetings of the State Council on fundamental questions about the development of culture in the GDR aroused similar hopes among many cultural workers. Ulbricht personally led these discussions, which had the character of a lively dialogue. He took his time

heard the analyzes from the departments and asked questions. In discussions with the heads of cultural institutions and representatives of artists' associations, burning problems were discussed and answers were sought.

In contrast to the rude tone on the

At the 11th meeting of the SED Central Committee there was a comradely, even friendly atmosphere. This type of involvement of many artists and the search for common solutions, this participation, contributed significantly to building trust.

Just the following example: On November 30, 1967, the...

State Councilor with cultural issues. The Minister of Culture, Klaus Gysi, gave a report on the ministry's activities and made programmatic suggestions for the individual arts. He raised z. B. emphasizes that the GDR is a country of high musical culture and compositional creativity and does not need to hide from the rest of the world.

The composers Ernst Hermann Meyer and Jean Kurt Forest spoke in the debate that Ulbricht led. They thanked Klaus Gysi for his critical comments and expressed the hope that the minister would attend concerts with new works more often. Meyer recalled that

There are currently around eighty music schools and six special children's music schools, and expressed the hope that the numbers could double in the next few years. Forest criticized the fact that works by GDR composers were given little support, that broadcast time on the radio was declining, and the same was also the case in concert halls. He asked for appropriate help. Ulbricht reacted immediately and suggested "that we don't leave this to the ministry alone, but that the People's Chamber Committee for Culture look into Comrade Forest's speech and check the facts.

He should also be interested in the work of the music department on television and radio and draw conclusions. Of course, he also has to deal with the following: What does training at music institutes look like? Does this training correspond to the decisions, or what is going on? The People's Chamber Committee should look at this carefully and then make its recommendations to the minister.

Our committee immediately formed several working groups to examine this problem at master's colleges, theaters and television facilities. As chairman of the culture committee

I talked about our exam results. This really happened, after just ten months.

On October 18, 1968, the 13th State Council meeting on development problems of intellectual and cultural life took place. This time even more cultural workers were invited. Minister Klaus Gysi again gave the keynote speech. More cultural workers came forward to present their problems and questions.

Music creation was discussed in detail and the results presented by our Committee for Culture from its investigations into music schools and universities, concert halls, etc

theaters, in discussions with conductors, concertmasters and composers.

It was once again a fruitful working session that brought together many creative forces, deepened the understanding of new and growing tasks and motivated many artists to new endeavors.

At the time, Walter Ulbricht had spoken of an interim balance; he certainly wanted to continue such discussions, and in my opinion this would have helped the matter. But that didn't happen anymore because Walter Ulbricht was gradually eliminated.

These consultations showed Walter Ulbricht's working methods; they demonstrated how operationally, thoroughly and quickly the situation was analyzed and improved. It was not ordered in a dictatorial manner, but rather the best solution was sought and found with those involved. So I would like to take this opportunity to state that Ulbricht was an important statesman in difficult revolutionary times - the Cold War. Where was there ever a statesman in Germany who took time for cultural development, sought direct connections to artists and working people and in this way?

acted as a promoter of culture and the arts for decades.

## Reprocessing

Günter Benser

For Ulbricht, history was a moving force

Günter Benser, born in 1931, was born and raised in Heidenau in Saxony and trained as an industrial clerk. After attending the Workers and Farmers Faculty, he studied history at the Karl Marx University. He then worked as a research assistant at the Institute for Marxism-Leninism (IML) at the Central Committee of the SED, member of the

Council for Historical Studies and the National Committee of Historians of the GDR. When the IML was reorganized into the Institute for the History of the Labor Movement (IfGA) in 1989, he was elected its director. The facility was closed in 1992. Günter Benser is the GDR National Prize winner.

It was February 2, 1968. On that day I was summoned to Walter Ulbricht to receive an order. Normally, we institute employees were assigned tasks that had to be completed by members of the party leadership

sent to their personal speakers. This time, however, the top boss appeared in person. So it had to be very important to him. I knew Walter Ulbricht not only from the media, but had repeatedly seen him at rallies and conferences, at meetings and consultations. Above all, I met him directly as chairman of the collective of authors of the eight-volume history of the German workers' movement - which will be discussed later.

But this time it was about a one-on-one conversation.

I went to the "Big House"

the headquarters of the Central Committee, and didn't have to wait long. The first thing I noticed was that he didn't address me with the cooperative "you" that is usual in the party, but with

"You" at. Since, as Chairman of the State Council, he was in conversation with different people, he probably did not always want to make the effort to differentiate, or he had his reasons for keeping his distance.

Ulbricht got straight to the point. He saw himself challenged by the present volumes of Konrad Adenauer's memoirs<sup>1</sup> and thought about adding his own perspective to them

to contrast German post-war history. Since I still have the notes that I made during this conversation, his instructions can be reconstructed almost exactly.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast to his successor Erich Honecker, who had his autobiography "From My Life"<sup>3</sup> largely pre-formulated by historians and journalists, Ulbricht emphasized that he was not interested in the views of us historians, but rather that he needed a compilation of authentic sources. He himself named a whole series of corresponding complexes. So noted

For example, I look at (translated here into generally understandable terms and arranged chronologically) the Yalta Conference and Stalin's position on German unity, agreement on the Allied Control Council and its headquarters in Berlin, Berlin status, Potsdam Conference, speech by British Prime Minister Churchill in Fulton and speech by US State Secretary Byrnes in Stuttgart, Moscow Foreign Ministers' Conference, stages of German division, currency split, remilitarization of the Federal Republic of Germany, revelation of secret plans, European Economic Community.

Not only Adenauer's name was mentioned, but also Kurt Schumacher's and Ernst Lemmer's, whose memoirs Ulbricht had apparently also read. Since I knew the available volumes of Adenauer's memoirs and had reviewed them for our history magazine, I had no trouble understanding Ulbricht's concerns.

A group of three scientists should take on this work under my leadership and be released from other tasks. The latter was an illusion, but a party leader and head of state did not have such details

harassed. The aim was to expand the number of employees.

The main participants were Rolf Badstübner and Heinz Heitzer from the Central Institute of History at the GDR Academy of Sciences and Wilhelm Ersil from the Academy of State and Law in Potsdam-Babelsberg.

How close the connection was to Adenauer's memoirs is demonstrated by the fact that we were given copies of these volumes, analyzed their structure and focuses and supplemented them with those important processes and events that had not interested the Federal Chancellor or that he had deliberately excluded

had. From all of this we derived the complexes on which we wanted to collect documents for Walter Ulbricht. Although we mostly only had published materials at our disposal, a meaningful collection of authentic testimonies of the decisive political forces of the Allies and the Germans in the West and East emerged - treaties, position papers, declarations, appeals, press reports and comments as well as excerpts from autobiographies and memories .

We had initially expected documentation of around 2,000 pages, but that was in October 1969

around 7,000 pages, assigned to 42 complexes<sup>4</sup>, in the creation of which other scientific and scientific-technical staff as well as translators were involved. After all, back then almost everything had to be typed out and collated.

I cannot remember that we received any response to our extensive work from Walter Ulbricht himself. To this end, his helpful spirits came forward and collected the volumes of the Adenauer memoirs that had been given to us. Apparently Ulbricht initially didn't get around to it because of other commitments

to deal in detail with his planned "anti-Adenauer". And after his replacement - which was lousy and cowardly in his approach - Ulbricht turned to historical questions. But he immersed himself so much in the early days of his political work, especially in the years before, during and after the November Revolution, that he no longer had time to do what would have been of greater value: his view of the post-war conflicts and the years of the Cold War and to assess his own role.

Ulbricht's memoir project actually didn't come as a surprise. Because

History has long occupied a central place in his strategic thinking and in the justification of his political goals. Our own experience described here brings us to the question of what Walter Ulbricht's relationship to history and historiography was in general. He himself has occasionally described historians as his "third profession". This was met with ridicule from his opponents, but it was inappropriate. In contrast to the pragmatists who govern us today, for whom Germany - despite patriotic rearmament and increasing political and military expansion - is primarily

Line is and remains a business location, Ulbricht saw history as a moving force. He was convinced that the political balance of power could be changed if it was possible to explain to people the historical decisions that affect the present, as well as wrong decisions, including their causes and connections. That is why most of his groundbreaking speeches and writings have a historical dimension, if they are not previously dedicated to historical topics.

It was not without reason that Ulbricht had the multi-volume (after his replacement

probably on Honecker's instructions, had the aborted) edition of his collected speeches and writings published under the title "On the History of the German Workers' Movement." That was certainly a bit presumptuous, but these books certainly contain a lot of history and historical significance.

Especially since the years of his exile in the USSR, Walter Ulbricht has explicitly devoted himself to historical topics. And this doesn't just apply to the commemorative articles and speeches that politicians of all stripes usually give on historical anniversaries and on the birth or death dates of important people

Personalities. There are also a considerable number of such reviews and appreciations from Ulbricht. They range from the Battle of Leipzig in 1813 to the founding of the SED and the GDR, from Friedrich Schiller to Wilhelm Pieck. No, what is meant here are serious discussions with deep and far-reaching historical processes and decision-making situations. It is no coincidence that at the beginning there is a problem that has occupied him throughout his life - the German November Revolution and its connections to the October Revolution in Russia.<sup>5</sup> This was not just about the entire past

events that shaped the century, but at the same time about the lasting basic experience of his generation. While his first observations were strongly based on the Short Course on the History of the CPSU<sup>6</sup>, which was published under Stalin's direction in 1938, his horizons later expanded considerably.

Ulbricht penned historical-political analyzes of Hitler's fascism, which were published after its dismantling under the title "The Legend of German Socialism"<sup>7</sup> and played a lasting role in overcoming the belief in the Führer and the fascist ideology in the minds of many

Contemporaries, especially of my generation, played. In 1955, a decade later, Ulbricht was also the first to present a book rich in material and documents, about the development path from the turn of the Second World War to the founding of the SED. It was based on contributions from Hans Schaul and Hans Vieillard and on information from other colleagues.

The commemoration of Karl Marx gave him the opportunity to reflect on his own strategic considerations and objectives with references to the founder of scientific socialism

substantiate. In the Karl Marx year of 1953, he announced his understanding of the role of socialist state power, according to which the functions of the dictatorship of the proletariat were exercised in the GDR. In his estate there are eighteen typewritten, closely written pages with excerpts from works by Marx, Engels and Lenin on this topic, which he has provided with numerous underlinings.<sup>8</sup>

Fifteen years later, at an international academic session, he justified his by no means uncontroversial view of the matter by citing Karl Marx

Socialism as a relatively independent social formation, with which the GDR differentiated itself from the immediate transition to communism proclaimed in the USSR and other countries.

Understandably, the main topic for Ulbricht was German post-war history and the conflicts between the two paths to solving the German question. It corresponded to Ulbricht's deepest conviction that German history is permeated by the struggle between two class lines and that the German nation in the age of imperialism is in a disastrous one

cycle was overthrown, characterized by "crisis - temporary economic upswing - crisis - war", which ultimately led to the devastating Second World War.<sup>9</sup> A cycle that had to be broken by the united (communist-led) workers' movement and its allies.

In this respect, for him the open German question had a deep social content and the social question had a far-reaching national dimension.

He had this view of the development of the divided but reunified German nation in detail in 1959 around the tenth

Anniversary of the GDR in his writing

"The path and goal of the German people" was presented. It was published in 1962 in the so-called

»National Document«<sup>10</sup> further developed. Under the short formula

It was a "basic national concept" that was widely used. Its core ideas became the binding orientation for historians of the GDR - not least in their work on an outline of German history and on the twelve-volume book that was forced to be canceled in 1989

"German History".

However, there was a differentiated approach to heritage and tradition in the GDR

only possible after the Ulbricht era. The previous narrowness, which was largely due to Soviet influences and for which Ulbricht was also responsible, led to the exclusion of artistic modernism, which had been close to the communist movement. And the ruthless treatment of Germany's architectural heritage - the demolition of the city palaces in Berlin and Potsdam, which were in need of renovation, as well as the Leipzig University Church - will be blamed on him in the long term.

Given the outstanding role played by the November Revolution in the

Ulbricht's historical thinking, it is no coincidence that its 40th anniversary triggered the activities that ultimately resulted in the publication of an eight-volume history of the German workers' movement, which undoubtedly represented the high point of SED historiography. The then Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute had been working on developing a history of the German workers' movement since the first half of the 1950s, but without making any rapid progress. For too long, those involved engaged in – sometimes sophistic – debates about the

periodization. A real debate with opposing positions arose around the character of the November Revolution, which also stimulated fruitful empirical research.

The matter ended with Ulbricht's ultimate verdict, for whom the November Revolution was "a bourgeois-democratic revolution, carried out to a certain extent with proletarian means and methods. Their main task – the overthrow of German imperialism – remained unsolved."<sup>11</sup>

This is where the ambiguity of the "third profession" became apparent

of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED in its full severity. Because a point of view was not only imposed from above, for which there was much to be said. Now the advocates of the opposing position, who emphasized above all the proletarian and socialist features of this uprising, even though their champions were defeated, had to answer for revisionist deviations. The crux remained that a person with a prominent historical impact appeared at the same time as a performer and interpreter of historical events, and this with the high authority and assertiveness of the leader

a Marxist-Leninist party. The fact that dealing with history is always and everywhere guided by interests had to have a particularly powerful impact here.

The question still remains: What is the authoritative determination of the character of the November Revolution, which was massively brought into public consciousness at the time, against the suppression of this revolution from the collective memory of the Germans, which we are dealing with today? Because in contrast to our French neighbors, the authorities in the Federal Republic of Germany negate the revolutionary origins of the German Republic, which we do every year

presented on November 9th. And it wouldn't occur to her to get excited about the nature of this revolution.

Where else did or does it exist that a party congress that adopts a new program is also presented with a draft outline of the history of its own movement for discussion, as was the case at the VI. SED party conference in January 1963 happened?<sup>12</sup> Before the Central Committee of the SED - historians were invited as guests with the right to speak - Ulbricht explained in June 1962 that this concentrated outline of the most important events

the history of the German workers' movement and its assessment by the SED should be put up for discussion before the working class and the entire population.<sup>13</sup> And in his closing words he emphasized that the discussion had begun in the GDR but had to be quickly brought to West Germany.<sup>14</sup>

This eye-catching and elaborate

The SED and Ulbricht's personal involvement with history became even more important because at that time the SPD was celebrating its 100th anniversary in memory of the Lassalle General German Workers' Association, founded in 1863.

prepared for the party's annual anniversary. In passing, it should be noted that despite all the contrasts, our and the social democratic historical narrative also had their similarities - they both focused on the development path of political organizations and their relationship to power. In both, however, the elementary movement of the workers, their living conditions and their self-development remained underexposed.

Currents such as the anarchist or syndicalist and the Christian Democratic workers' movements remained largely ignored.

After approval of the floor plan

The history of the workers' movement immediately began the preparation of a three-volume history of the German workers' movement, which was intended to expand the existing framework into an illustrative building. This task was tackled on a broad front. Supported by numerous experts and helpers, twenty historians wrote the drafts of this historical work, whereby they also had to bridge those areas for which research preparation was poor or completely absent. The resulting manuscripts were given to one of Walter Ulbricht

led by a collective of authors, which was actually an editorial committee, and discussed in detail. As a participant in these deliberations, I can confirm that Ulbricht read line by line, that he had a wealth of factual knowledge and was interested in important evaluations being discussed collectively.

However, these were discussions that were essentially about how the representation was presented or about its enrichment, while solid stakes had already been set for the interpretations with the floor plan that had been made a decision. And there were no doubts about who

dissenting opinions would have the last word.

Just in time for the 20th anniversary of the founding of the SED, an eight-volume history of the German workers' movement was published, which would never have been completed at this speed without Ulbricht's direct influence. It represents an achievement by all the social scientists involved, the editors at Dietz Verlag and the GDR printing industry, which did not leave observers in the Federal Republic and later analysts of GDR historiography unimpressed. That this feat of strength

It should not be kept secret that it took place at the expense of other book projects and authors who were also pushing their way into the public eye.

The elaborations could not be accommodated in the originally planned three volumes. Four or five volumes did not provide a convincing structure. So the decision was made to diversify into eight volumes. This had the advantage that there was now space in each volume for an extensive appendix in which contemporary documents were included, including documents from the "opposite side", the authorities of the German state, testimonies from the victors and

Occupying powers, from business committees and from organs of the German parties, especially the reformist social democrats. The "Outline of the History of the German Workers' Movement" and especially the "Eight Volumes" or "The Historical Work", as it was sometimes formulated somewhat pompously, provoked criticism from the West, especially from social democratic historians. "Ulbricht falsifies history"<sup>15</sup> was the title of a reply written in the language of the Cold War. The critics were right when they denounced that in the

The SED's historiography left out quite a few inglorious aspects of the communist movement and, in particular, the involvement in Stalin's crimes, and a whitewashed line of tradition focused on the communist movement was created, which ran from the League of Communists through the revolutionary German social democracy and the German left KPD and SED led, whereby the GDR appeared unreservedly as the realization of the goals and ideals of the workers' movement and as the nucleus of the future unified socialist Germany.

Nevertheless, these critics generally did not get to the core of Ulbricht's understanding of history. His general view of the conflicts between two major socio-political camps within the German nation, which have not yet been fully fought, and of the struggle to realize the vision of a future society has not been refuted.

It is also not true what the SED historiography analyst Siegfried Lokatis claimed in retrospect that the "eight volumes" were "'Holy Scripture' of the SED"<sup>16</sup> functioned.

Yes, this presentation provided orientations and evaluations that were respected by all GDR historians. Nevertheless, Walter Ulbricht did not consider this work to be the end of the SED's historiography. Accordingly, the foreword said: "The multi-volume historical work summarizes the previous results of historical work and creates a new starting point for further research."<sup>17</sup>

The need for a 2nd improved edition was discussed early on, which is what others said

"Holy Scriptures" have never been encountered before. The authors have put together lists of urgent topics to be addressed as suggestions for dissertations or diploma theses. I remember Ulbricht personally commenting on topics I suggested. In any case, he had already criticized historians in 1962 for raising far too few new questions on their own.<sup>18</sup>

Incidentally, people in the West at that time did not rely on the power of counterarguments. When we were in Frankfurt am Main in May 1965 on one of the former

When KPD member of the Bundestag Walter Fisch presented the basic ideas of our understanding of history at the August Bebel Society event, I registered 250 participants, two police personnel carriers, ten police officers in plain clothes and two officers from the Office for the Protection of the Constitution.<sup>19</sup> The latter always increased their attention when it was mentioned what the future unified Germany should look like and what Berlin status was all about.

When the history of the German workers' movement was available in eight volumes, federal German authorities left

with strict restrictions against their spread. As Neues Deutschland reported on September 23, 1966, citing the Hamburger Abendblatt, copies of volumes 5 to 8 sent by post - covering the years 1933 to 1963 - were confiscated by customs officials in Hanover and presented to the Hamburg public prosecutor's office, which in turn requested a report from the Office for the Protection of the Constitution. Of course, similar things happened in the GDR and probably even more often, but when it came to essential interests, the West was not squeamish either.

In any case, all of this suggests that the SED's historical offensive launched under Ulbricht in the Federal Republic was certainly given importance.

Looking back, it was an illusory expectation that dealing with history could lead to a unity of action among workers' organizations in East and West that would fight for a united Germany on a socialist basis. In this respect, the historiography carried out under the aegis of Walter Ulbricht faced a fundamental conflict of objectives between its analytical and its propagandistic functions.

Nevertheless, the "basic national concept" was not the worst of all conceivable guiding ideas for an overall presentation of the history of the German workers' movement, especially since in this understanding the national and social question was very closely linked to the question of peace. With the efforts to develop and disseminate the "Eight Bands", the workers' movement, its history as well as many of its ideals and values became unified not only in historiography, but also in the social consciousness in East Germany and, to a lesser extent, in West Germany

outstanding place. Without the challenge posed by the GDR (and the push of the '68 movement), the history of the labor movement in the Federal Republic would not have been able to establish itself as a discipline at universities and colleges if it had not been so supported by foundations and other donors. In the now enlarged Federal Republic of Germany, however, it once again ekes out a miserable existence. Today it is possible to reflect on the spiritual foundations and values of a European community without the trace left by the European workers' movement

just to mention.

Many questions are different today than they were during Ulbricht's lifetime, but some of the ideas that he introduced into the understanding of history will have to be discussed again sooner or later. Because they still offer more suggestions for penetrating historical contexts and their consequences than the delegitimization task that most GDR researchers are currently following more or less eagerly.

1 Konrad Adenauer: Memories 1945-1953,

1953-1955, 1955-1959, 1959-1961

Fragments, Stuttgart 1965-1968. 2 Foundation Archive of the Parties and

Mass organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archives (SAPMO-BArch), NY 4617, box 3, issue 25.

Erich Honecker: From my life, Berlin 1981.

SAPMO-BArch, op. cit., issue 30.

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History of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (Bolsheviks). Short course, Moscow 1939.

Walter Ulbricht: The legend of German socialism. A textbook for the creative people about the nature of German fascism, Berlin 1946.

SAPMO-BArch, NY 4182/888, pp. 189-206.

Walter Ulbricht: The path and goal of the German people. In: *ibid.*: On the history of the German workers' movement. From speeches and essays, Vol. VIII: 1959-1960, Berlin 1965, P. 375.

The historical task of the German Democratic Republic and the future of Germany. In: Programmatic documents of the National Front of Democratic Germany, ed. and deposited v. Helmut Neef, Berlin 1967, pp. 200-238.

Outline of the history of the German workers' movement, Berlin 1963, p. 110.

History of the German workers' movement. Chronicle, Berlin 1967.

Unit born in 1962, special issue.

ibid

Hermann Weber: Ulbricht is falsifying history. A comment on the »Floor plan

the history of the German workers' movement", Cologne 1964.

Siegfried Lokatis: The common thread. Communist party history and censorship under Walter Ulbricht, Cologne/Weimar/Vienna 2003, p. 328.

History of the German workers' movement, Vol. 1, Berlin 1966, p. 10

See Walter Ulbricht: On the history of the German workers' movement, Vol. X: 1961-1962, Berlin 1966, p. 558.

SAPMO-BArch, NY 4617, box 6.

Siegfried Prokop

Augstein: The GDR can be lucky to have such a party leader

Siegfried Prokop, born in 1940, after graduating from high school in Neubrandenburg, studied history and German in Berlin and Leningrad, received his doctorate in 1967, lecturer at the Humboldt University in Berlin since 1979, from 1983 to 1996 he taught there as a professor of contemporary history.

Visiting professorships in Paris (1987), Moscow (1988) and Montreal (1991).

From 1994 to 1996 he was the successor to Wolfgang Harich as chairman of the Alternative Enquete Commission on Contemporary German History.

The review of Walter Ulbricht's work must be historically critical. But he must also not ignore the fact that his historical achievement was reduced after 1971. During the time that Ulbricht had political responsibility in the GDR, the country moved into the role of a junior partner of the Soviet Union, economic growth was at five percent or more, and social benefits were economical

well-founded, there was no foreign debt of any significant size. 1970 was the year with the highest accumulation in the history of the GDR. Under Ulbricht, the GDR came to the threshold of immediate global recognition under international law through its own economic strength. People in the West spoke respectfully of the "second German economic miracle" and of "Red Prussia".

Walter Ulbricht was a successful politician, although compared to his counterparts in the West it should be noted that he came from a much less favorable situation

acted and tried to realize a social alternative after a catastrophe. Ulbricht began his career as a man of unconditional loyalty to the USSR under JV Stalin, and he was overthrown as a reformer who distanced himself from the stagnant politics of Leonid I. Brezhnev. Despite all the inconsistencies in the reform concept, from today's perspective this change appears to be the most remarkable thing in Walter Ulbricht's work.

The approach of Gerhard Zwerenz, who set standards in his Ulbricht study from 1966, is methodologically interesting. The content of the study

became known to GDR citizens mainly through the review written by Sebastian Haffner in the . Based on Zwerenz, Haffner had also made an assessment of Ulbricht's role in other publications that was free of anti-communist distortions. Zwerenz wrote: "Whether one appreciates it or not, Walter Ulbricht represents, in his person and as an exponent of his party, the continuity of the German revolutionary tradition; and by creating a state for himself, he thwarted all West German efforts to uphold the revolutionary tradition of the left in Germany

eliminate."<sup>1</sup>

If you focus on Ulbricht's work in the 1950s<sup>2</sup>, Ulbricht's farsightedness stands out compared to Konrad Adenauer. As early as 1950 he successfully pushed for the recognition of the Oder-Neisse border, while West German policy towards Germany remained unrealistically demanding a Germany within the borders of 1937.

The Federal Republic continued the traditional bourgeois excess that Zwerenz described in that study: "This bourgeoisie that was never up to date with its times and situation and was always just something of the past

wanted to restore, only lost new areas with every attempt at restoration and responded with renewed aggressiveness, whereby the Völkisch managed to carry the people along with them. In this way they lost two wars, received the over-Versailles of Potsdam from the rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and are now fighting the war that had been carried over the Rhine, the Vistula and the Volga, on the Elbe, the river in the middle Germany: thrown back on itself and still with the same unresolved problems."<sup>3</sup>

Ulbricht particularly attracted the hatred of the bourgeois class forces. The writer Otto Gotsche,



Ulbricht's secretary in the State Council, at the same time, felt compelled to write a rhyme that is artistically unimportant, but nevertheless conveys something of the atmosphere of that time:

The enemy has spat hatred and scorn,  
And because they hate him, we love him.

Our call to the enemies:

Walter Ulbricht – that's all of us! The attacks against Ulbricht extend to the present day, including some of them  
Attacks and falsifications of his role should be pointed out here.

The Russian historian Boris

In a publication, Chavkin accused Walter Ulbricht of leaving no stone unturned in June 1953 to gain the reputation of "a greater Stalinist than Stalin himself"<sup>4</sup>. As early as July 1952, Ulbricht, as general secretary of the SED, had announced the "course for the accelerated construction of socialism"<sup>5</sup>, Chavkin claims, in accordance with the decree of the Council of Ministers of the USSR of June 2, 1953 "On the measures for the recovery of the political situation in Germany Democratic Republic"<sup>6</sup>.

This formulation is with reference to  
the 2nd party conference of the SED did not

correct, and one has to ask why almost all of the more recent June 17th literature uses this incorrect formulation.

I quote from the minutes of the 2nd party conference what Ulbricht actually said there: "In accordance with the proposals from the working class, from the working peasantry and from other circles of the working people, the Central Committee of the SED has decided to propose to the 2nd party conference: that socialism is being built according to plan in the German Democratic Republic."<sup>7</sup>

So we were talking about

"planned" and not by

"accelerated" construction of socialism! Historians should always stick to the sources.

Ulbricht only spoke of an "accelerated" construction of socialism at the 10th plenary session of the SED Central Committee (November 20-22, 1952).<sup>8</sup>

The background was the misjudgment of the international situation by the ill Josef W. Stalin, who assumed in October 1952 that a war in Europe was imminent<sup>9</sup>.

In the short term, at the instigation of the Soviet Control Commission (SKK), the GDR had to increase its armament efforts by a further 1.5

increase billions of DM. This escalation contributed significantly to the crisis of 1953.

From June 2nd to 4th, 1953, Otto Grotewohl, Fred Oelßner and Walter Ulbricht stayed in Moscow, where the CPSU party leadership offered a sudden course correction. Such "new courses" were also recommended to other socialist countries.

Elaborations for a "new course" in the GDR were prepared by a commission headed by Politburo member Fred Oelßner, of which Gustav Just<sup>10</sup> was also a member. But it was probably not the "new course" that was at the deliberations

caused a clash between Beria and Ulbricht, but rather the intention pursued by Beria and other members of the party executive committee to put the GDR at risk.

It is not the "accelerated" construction of socialism that should be ended, but rather the construction of socialism in general.

The fact that Ulbricht resisted this was his right, but that did not mean that he was therefore more Stalinist than Stalin. Konrad Adenauer also strongly opposed Churchill's initiative to resolve the German question on May 11, 1953 within the framework of a pan-European solution

security system<sup>11</sup> That Ulbricht was involved in the crisis of 1953.

June also made mistakes, shows, among other things, the oversized preparation of his 60th birthday, most of which was canceled as part of the "New Course".

Ulbricht's reaction to Nikita S. Khrushchev's secret speech after the XXth century The Congress of the CPSU is mainly recorded in the report by Karl Schirdewan. In his book

"Uprising against Ulbricht" - a title that Schirdewan didn't like - it says: "You can safely say that Stalin is not a classic."<sup>12</sup> That is catchy and short and became

subsequently all too often as Ulbricht's reaction to the XX. Party congress of the CPSU was rumored. Under no circumstances is it correct to see this statement as proof that Ulbricht was an unbroken Stalinist in 1956, as is so often the case in contemporary historical literature.

Schirdewan forgot to praise in his pocketbook the reform progress he himself had highlighted at the 29th meeting of the Central Committee in 1956: "A bonus system was introduced for state and cooperative trading, which paid a share of sales according to individual performance

Sales force secured. However, this year alone this will cost us an additional 50,487,000 DM. The introduction of the installment payment business in state and cooperative trading has met with great approval among the population. This decision led to the first time that the relationship between the sale of food and industrial goods began to change in favor of the sale of industrial goods.<sup>13</sup> Such innovations had no chance in the Soviet Union until its end.

Although the reform phase in the wake of the Hungarian tragedy also took place in the

GDR was ended, for the sake of completeness it could have been added that in 1956 the breakthrough in the field of youth consecration was achieved through undogmatic politics, while the orthodox rejection of youth consecration by church representatives experienced a defeat.

What was important for everyday culture was that the dogmatic narrowness towards nudist bathing was overcome. On the initiative of the Cultural Association, the old one was replaced

"Police Ordinance of July 10, 1942" and the "Order for the Regulation of Outdoor Swimming Pools of May 18, 1956."<sup>14</sup> This marked the beginning of the triumph of nudism.

Baden in the GDR.

Of course, reforms of a completely different quality would have been desirable in 1956. Fritz Behrens, Wolfgang Harich and Kurt Vieweg submitted suggestions. But since the XX. When the party congress blamed all the undesirable developments in the Stalin era on a single person and declared Soviet society sacrosanct, the impulse that the reformers had hoped for did not come from Moscow.

Gerhard Zwerenz had already expressed the assumption in 1966 that Ulbricht had probably wanted the renunciation of Stalinism to be different than what had happened with the 20th century. Party conference held

was.<sup>15</sup>

1956 will have given food for thought to all Marxists who were able to read Palmiro Togliatti's interview with the magazine *Nuovi Argumenti*, which also applied to Ulbricht. Togliatti had explained: "Once everything that is good was due to the superhuman, positive qualities of a single man - now everything that is bad is attributed to the equally extraordinary shortcomings of the same man." In one case as in the other, we lack the touchstone to judge. The real problems do not come to light - for example, how Soviet society came to be

was able to move so far away from the democratic path and legality that he had charted out for himself.<sup>16</sup>

Decades later, Togliatti's compatriot Domenico Losurdo compared the different approaches to the legacy of Stalin and Mao Tsetung: "It's about emphasizing the objectively contradictory character of the consciousness process, and not the 'betrayal' or the 'Degeneration' of this or that personality. By reducing everything to the 'cult of personality' and demonizing Stalin, Khrushchev inherited his worse inheritance. Because he refused to take part in the argument

Doing the same with Mao, Deng Xiaoping inherited his better side. In any case, the procedure that the new Chinese leadership chose avoided the delegitimization of revolutionary power.<sup>17</sup>

Whether Ulbricht was able to penetrate so deeply into the conflict of 1956 remains to be seen. It seems likely that he was thinking in such a direction.

Ulbricht used the term at the 29th meeting of the SED Central Committee

"Unfortunate," indicating how problematic he considered Khrushchev's approach: "You know that we have to be careful. It is a

An important document that was sent to some parties fell into the wrong, i.e. opposing, hands. This caused great international damage. You will understand that we are now a little more cautious about such things. We will probably now have to proceed by calling a number of comrades together and informing them orally. In this way, the Central Committee members in the districts are then informed. So I don't want written documents to be released in these cases. An accident has happened and that is enough."<sup>18</sup> At the Berlin party activist conference

Humboldt University on June 13, 1956, Ulbricht stated: "Comrade Havemann gave some very interesting information in the discussion. He said that the 'error criticism' made it seem as if the party had made mistakes against the 'good old' way. He correctly noticed that the opponents talk about the law, but in reality they are constantly bending the law in West Germany. In fact, even if one takes all the mistakes made under Stalin's leadership in the Soviet Union, or mistakes made in the people's democracies such as: B. the Rajk process and the Kostoff process, that's what they are

Soviet democracy and popular rule in the people's democratic countries are a thousand times more democratic than the wicked system of the dictatorship of monopoly capital in West Germany, where only the right of monopoly capital exists."<sup>19</sup>

The fact that Ulbricht crossed out the passage printed in italics here and therefore did not release it to a wider public shows that he was not sure about his assessment. But the passage also shows that he struggled to make an offensive interpretation; This too had to fail because Moscow had provided a framework that was objective

was designed to delegitimize the revolutionary process.

At the 29th conference in particular, Ulbricht put forward reform ideas that were primarily aimed at strengthening the rights of workers in the companies.<sup>20</sup> His concept of workers' committees ultimately meant the restoration of the works councils, which is why he faced resistance primarily from the leadership of the FDGB came across that did not want such competition. The representatives of the workers' committees were to be elected secretly and a third more candidates than could be elected were to stand for election.

Walter Janka, Gustav Just and Wolfgang Harich should have followed Ulbricht's willingness to lead the reform forces. But the interview that Ulbricht granted Harich was not used for this purpose. It failed. Harich did not say anything about the causes of the failure. What was discussed between Ulbricht and Harich on November 7, 1956 became known to the public through Harich's descriptions. In his book "No Difficulties with the Truth" he used 21 lines for this. He wrote that the conversation only lasted 20 minutes. Unlike the conversation with Ambassador Pushkin

He didn't say a word about his reform concept. Why not? But what did Harich say? »When I spoke generally about uncertain times and made it clear that I considered a political exchange of opinions between the leadership and the intelligentsia, for example within the framework of the Academy of Sciences, to be necessary, Ulbricht cut me off with the exclamation that it was bad. At that time, that there were traitors, Lukács, Tibor Déry, Julius Hay and others in Hungary, he declared that they were all traitors. 'And I'll tell you one thing: If something like a Petöfi club were to be formed here, it would be here

be nipped in the bud.' I also ignored the warning that was clearly expressed."<sup>21</sup> Harich did not tell the reader why Ulbricht reacted so violently.

Since it was never published, Ulbricht's account of the conversation was not as well known as Harich's.

At the Central Work Conference of the SED Central Committee in December 1956, Walter Ulbricht described his conversation with Harich: "The following happened to me: I summoned Mr. Harich to a meeting. Since he is a professor of philosophy and editor-in-chief of the magazine for

philosophy, I wanted to talk to him about why the conflict of opinion in philosophy is not progressing, why the new problems of socialism are not being discussed, the questions of socialist morality, etc. After five minutes, Mr. Harich said to me: You know, that's why it doesn't work at all. There are no complaints about the scientific conflict of opinion. He's doing quite well in public. – So he wasn't interested in that at all. He continued: There are much more important questions, for example the consequences of the international situation. It is time for full independence for everyone

people's democracies and all peoples. – I asked: What more independence should we get? It's not entirely clear to me. Nobody influences our politics. We don't have any representatives who would get the government to take any action. What do you actually want? This is incomprehensible to me. – He answered: Well, that means full independence, for example, of the states that are grouped together in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. – I asked back: So you mean the independence of Ukraine and Soviet Russia? Yes, that too. - I

said: I understand it now. That actually has nothing to do with philosophy. This is not just counter-revolution. This is a concept for war. – That was the very objective conversation we had.«<sup>22</sup>

It seems plausible that Ulbricht, as a real politician, could not get involved in such a concept in 1956. In 1956, Harich saw conflicts at work in the Soviet Union that only came to full fruition in the early 1990s with the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In 1956, this could not be item 1 of the reform agenda in the GDR. And Harich probably quickly understood that, because he reported in the »Kreis

of like-minded people" did not know how he had caused the conversation to fail.<sup>23</sup> This was the main reason why his colleagues were unable to draw any correct conclusions about how to proceed.

It was only during the talks between Rudolf Augstein and Wolfgang Harich on November 28, 1956 that Harich experienced a frontal rejection. Spiegel boss Augstein accused Harich of having succumbed to psychosis against Ulbricht. He thinks this is stupid. Ulbricht was a very energetic and skilful man and superior to most leaders in the Eastern Bloc. It doesn't come down to one

Change of leadership in the SED, but in line with Moscow politics. If this line is correct, and it will certainly be based on the Polish and Hungarian experiences, then Ulbricht will implement this line in the GDR more energetically and thoroughly than his colleagues in the Eastern European countries. Harich objected violently. But Augstein stuck to his opinion. Ulbricht would represent Harich's views better than Harich once they had prevailed in Moscow. Harich should be happy that the GDR has this "nimble old fox"<sup>24</sup> as party leader.

There is still a lot to be said about Ulbricht's role in 1956, especially why he took such harsh, repressive action against the intellectual opposition in the GDR<sup>25</sup> after the Hungarian tragedy (including show trials and long prison sentences), but that would be beyond the scope of this article. As a consequence of the Hungarian events, Ulbricht saw securing power as the No. 1 imperative. He eliminated political opponents, but unlike Stalin, Ulbricht left them alive.

Nor did he direct repression against the entire intelligentsia. With the founding of the Research Council of the GDR

in 1957 it was signaled that scientists and technicians would receive funding and support.

In 1993, a daily newspaper asked me to write an article on the occasion of the 100th anniversary.

Walter Ulbricht's birthday. This could be a whole newspaper page long. A special bonus was the possibility that the draft of the article could be discussed with Lotte Ulbricht, who was otherwise unwilling to talk to journalists and historians. Not too much was promised. I received the appointment in Berlin-Pankow, Majakowski-Ring. Lotte received me

quite unfriendly: "Who are you anyway? You don't know Walter at all." She left no doubt that, in her opinion, I had written too critically about Walter. I asked her why Wolfgang Harich had been treated in the well-known repressive manner. She then said: "Harich had let the enemy dictate his program to him." I couldn't convince her that Harich never let anyone dictate anything to him, nor was his program hostile. On the contrary, it should have been discussed...

The article that is then published

was by no means uncritical.<sup>26</sup> I had also discussed the draft with Wolfgang Harich before publication. However, at that point I was not yet aware that it was Harich who had missed an opportunity in his conversation with Ulbricht.

Ulbricht's victory over the opposition in 1956 was associated with the suppression of any approach to democratic socialism, which was considered an unsuitable concept by the SPD and was rejected for the GDR.

Ulbricht's course was aimed at a "real socialism" (other readings: "state socialism",

"Authoritarian socialism"), which was partly based on the Chinese model (until 1960) and predominantly on the Soviet model, which amounted to a regression behind the political democracy of bourgeois society. Public ownership remained at the level of state ownership, which meant that there was no real socialization of the means of production and alienation continued to have an effect. The socialist democracy proclaimed in 1958 ("Work with us, plan with us, govern with us!") offered opportunities for development, but only within a limited framework. One that takes on a life of its own

Bureaucracy made use of centralization and bureaucratic centralism. "Real socialism" had only limited binding power towards its citizens. Many citizens of the GDR who were guided by socialist ideals also went to the West.

The sculptor René Graetz explained the phenomenon that a large number of left-wing art students in the GDR went to the West:

"Two thirds of the students in the West come from the East. That's a catastrophe.

This is a result of our politics. Our students know nothing at all about modern art. You have about this

only learned: This is support for imperialism, this is reactionary, etc. - The period from 1900 to today is a completely unknown page for this entire generation. Lenin once said: You have to learn from everyone."<sup>27</sup> Expressions of opinion that could have provided the impetus for change were dismissed as "ambiguities." But given the dogmatism of the SED apparatus that still prevails, how could each individual spontaneously identify with the social whole?

Especially homemade mistakes by the SED led by Walter Ulbricht

contributed to the worsening of the situation in the GDR in the late 1950s and early 1960s:

The unreal overtaking maneuver of the Fifth Party Congress of the SED towards the Federal Republic, which was supposed to lead to an overtaking in per capita consumption in 1961 and an overtaking in labor productivity in 1965 (Seven-Year Plan 1959).

The hasty introduction of the ten-year polytechnic secondary school education, which further exacerbated the acute labor shortage due to the delayed start of careers by around 80 percent of two age groups.

The "Socialist Spring" campaign in 1960, which, at the high price of a decline in gross agricultural production, completed the merger into agricultural cooperatives ahead of schedule compared to the Seven Year Plan (1965).

The double-digit billion dollar bad investment in the aircraft industry, which a small country like the GDR could not easily absorb. If the resources for the aircraft industry had been channeled into streamlining industrial production, a significant increase in productivity could have been achieved. (It became a bad investment

However, it only came about through the withdrawal of the Soviet Union's original promise to introduce the 152 jet developed in the GDR to Aeroflot. Without this wholesale market, aircraft production made no economic sense, which is why it never even started.)

The crisis of 1961 caused a rethink in Ulbricht and made him as a statesman in the following decade much wiser than before, about which there is no need to write more here. Finally, we should question what the anti-communist zeitgeist was in June

1961 Ulbricht incorrectly as

Accused of the "lie of the century". At an international press conference on June 15, 1961, in response to a query from Annemarie Doherr from the Frankfurter Rundschau, Walter Ulbricht correctly stated that no one had any intention of building a wall. When asked by Spiegel whether control over aviation security also included control of passengers, Ulbricht explained: "Whether people come to the GDR by land, sea or air, they are under our control... We do it the same way, like they do in London. That's all right."<sup>28</sup>

What Ulbricht said here was nothing but the truth. In June 1961, neither the Soviet Union nor the GDR had the goal of building a wall in Berlin. At that time, the course was set to expand Berlin-Schönefeld Airport as a central airport for East and West Berliners. An "air solution" was sought for the conflict that arose around Berlin. That would have been a solution in the interests of citizens in East and West. However, citing Allied rights, the Western powers blocked an "air solution," which is why Nikita Khrushchev decided at the end of July 1961 for a land closure<sup>29</sup>, which the Warsaw

Contracting states as well as the People's Chamber and the GDR government agreed in the following days. This "wall" solution was by no means achieved without the West's involvement.<sup>30</sup>

Gerhard Zwerenz: Walter Ulbricht. Archive of contemporary history. Munich/Bern/Vienna 1966, p. 25.

See Siegfried Prokop: Walter Ulbricht's work in the 1950s, in: GeschichteKorrespondenz, Berlin 2008, No. 3, pp. 20-25

Zwerenz, Walter Ulbricht..., p. 25

Boris Chavkin: Moscow and the popular uprising in the GDR, in: This: Interconnections of German and Russian contemporary history. Edited by Markus Edlinger and with a foreword by Leonid Luks. Stuttgart 2008, p. 234

Ibid., p. 233

See Wilfriede Otto: The SED in June 1953. Internal documents. Berlin 2003, p. 39.

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Diether Dehm

A demon image tilts

Diether Dehm, born in 1950, studied special and curative education in Frankfurt am Main after graduating from high school, and has been a songwriter and author for music and cabaret artists since the late 1960s. In 1981 he called with Lindenberg, Wader and others

"Artist for Peace" and in 1983 he founded the record label "Musikant". At 15, he joined the Falken, 1965 SPD, 1994 federal chairman of the SPD entrepreneurs and moved into the

Bundestag. In 1998 he left the SPD with 24 other Social Democrats from Frankfurt am Main and joined the PDS on the day of the federal election. Since 2005, member of the Bundestag for the PDS/Left.

During the years I attended school in Frankfurt am Main, the Walter Ulbricht image was that of a demon: "the goatee," "the Saxon fistula voice," "the vassal of Moscow," "the bloody governor of Stalin," and so on "Splitters of Germany".

But already as an advertiser for the Jusos and their demand for recognition of the Oder-Neisse line and later for

Willy Brandt's Ostpolitik, then as a campaigner against the CDU vote of no confidence on April 27, 1972, I urgently needed new arguments. Against what Springer was inciting.

Willy Brandt, of all people, should extend a negotiating hand to a murderous state and an unjust regime? What Adenauer, Kiesinger, Barzel and NPD portrayed the GDR as. In order to at least defend diplomatic relations with the GDR government a little, I was forced to obtain more detailed counter-information.

First I had to study the extreme emergency in which the

Forceps birth GDR (formerly SBZ) had inevitably come from the World War. I realized the extreme imbalance between the East and West economic areas.

And also the denazification, in which the anti-fascist GDR wanted to hire young, new, inexperienced entrepreneurs and completely replace mostly economic and political cadres (which the Federal Republic of Germany renounced by having its economy built up by old mass murderers) - all of this had to be "mitigating" the punishment. for the GDR in the social democratic environment and to the electorate and information stands

to be brought. At that time, the Oath of Buchenwald was a civilizational imperative, but by no means an economic development program. But it wasn't just me and my family who were anti-fascists who were impressed by this.

At the end of the war, the Soviet occupation zone was separated from the heavy industry located in the West and had one and a half blast furnaces that had been destroyed - compared to the Federal Republic of Germany, which had many times as many blast furnaces that had previously been wisely spared by the Anglo-American Air Force. Industrial remnants in East Germany were for reparations

dismantled down to the railway sleepers by the Soviets. While the USA and other Western capitals had put financially free tips into a gigantic reconstruction program for West Germany via the Marshall Plan etc.

The more it became clear to me as a student that the emergency situation was the end of the GDR, the more closely I looked at clever economic measures and even the idiosyncratic improvisations of Walter Ulbricht. It only really became clear to me when, although later, I became sympathetic to Lenin and then Bukharin (the so-called right-wing deviant of the Bolsheviks) and their new ones

Economic policy that also strategically upgraded private small and medium-sized property.

Then, as a left-wing entrepreneur (and as federal chairman of the SPD entrepreneurs), I understood in my own work how necessary and complicated it is to include small and medium-sized businesses in a post-capitalist economy, which we also called anti-monopolistic democracy. (Because the state has nothing more effective in its toolbox for the management of small commercial and craft businesses than throttling talent and...

private initiative.)

Later I read Haffner's statement about Ulbricht, which said that after Bismarck, Ulbricht was one of the most important German politicians.

For me today, Ulbricht's name is also associated with the attempt to reform the GDR economy in the form of the New Economic System of Planning and Management. He worked for this with foresight, particularly during the years 1962/63. If in the country's economy - as set out in the Council of Ministers' decision of July 11, 1963 - economic levers such as prime costs, more flexible prices, profit as a decision-making factor, loans, wages,

bonuses should come into effect (a kind of socialist "check & balance"), then I see this today as a realistic, promising approach to overcoming the GDR's labor productivity gap compared to the FRG and thus also to increasing the GDR's political weight in Germany - German relations. The increase in the annual accumulation rate from 17.6 percent (1963) to over 20 from 1965 onwards testified to the effect of such an economy.

In contrast, later, when the great anti-fascist founding fire of the

The GDR gradually became a backwater and the majority of the non-state-owned companies that still existed were nationalized. Private companies, companies with state participation and craft production cooperatives (PGH) were affected. In any case, this was not an advantage for the GDR economy. This did nothing to reduce queues, dissatisfaction and the corresponding need for informants.

Walter Ulbricht's activities regarding the "Confederacy" also made a lasting impression on me "Germany United fatherland". I call this term here as

Collective label for suggestions initially to ease the relationship between the two German states. This included sending a draft for "Principles for the reunification of Germany as a peace-loving democratic state", in 1964 the suggestion to offer for sale FRG press organs such as Die Zeit and Süddeutsche Zeitung in the GDR and GDR papers such as Neues Deutschland in the FRG, and in 1966 the proposal for an exchange of speakers.

The idea of confederation was taken up again in a second variant: a peace agreement

and reconciliation should be striven for. The Willy-Willi talks between Brandt and Stoph in Erfurt and Kassel in 1970 also had their origins in a suggestion by Walter Ulbricht. He presented it at the 7th SED Party Congress in 1967. The same applies to the admission of the German states to the UN and the treaty on the non-use of force between the two German states and the recognition of the borders in Europe.

Much of what Ulbricht had already thought and put forward constructively in 1968 later became reality. This was the case in the basic treaty of 1972.

At some point mine turned

monster picture; The ugly frog that Ulbricht was portrayed as by my school, my SPD, and my reading of the media did not turn into a prince, but into a human being. The demon tipped over. To an idiosyncratic statesman whose questions interested me extremely. That he was on the 16th/17th. June 1953 rejected Brecht's offer, stupid SED indoctrination through street and Ulbricht's cultural concept certainly doesn't appeal to me to replace the Berliner Ensemble's radio art in order to initiate a more meaningful dialogue with the dissatisfied

brought closer (the GDR radio played operetta music all day while the tanks rolled in, greeting Brecht).

Neither did Ulbricht's initial litanies against the Beatles and "Western decadent dancing apart."

But at least: Brecht had chosen East Berlin (voluntarily and against other offers). And the most important theater in Europe was able to work on Schiffbauerdamm (even with an assistant director, Wolf Biermann, supported by Hanns Eisler) and even survive all sorts of Politburo platitudes in a political enclave - thanks also to Ulbricht.

Later the wall was built

him and my comrades. Actually, it was Franz Josef Strauss, of all people, who overturned a demonic image of the Cold War with his memoirs. This Cold War champion notes in his memoirs that the construction of the wall "relaxed the world situation," that is, freed it from the danger that "the Stalinist bureaucracies in the East could lose control over the working class and that military intervention by the Western powers would become necessary." . After Strauß there the growing threat of war and even (I rubbed my eyes twice) the plans developed by NATO

When the atomic bomb was dropped on the GDR, he writes: "With the construction of the wall, the crisis was not only lifted, albeit in an unpleasant way for the Germans, but actually also ended."<sup>31</sup>

And with Strauss's memoirs, many questions that were difficult to express openly arose. Even after the threat of nuclear war hung over us children, back when we were only in the 4th or 5th grade of school.

So I had to thoroughly readjust my relationship with this strange man Walter Ulbricht, so I can only advise other Wessis from this posthumous encounter:

Browse more! About Ulbricht and this time. With the question methods of "reading worker".

So that the whole story no longer belongs to capital's writing mercenaries.

Franz Josef Strauss: Memories, Berlin 1989, p. 390

Kurt Gossweiler

Under Ulbricht, the SED resisted revisionism to the maximum

Kurt Gossweiler, born in 1917, born and raised in Stuttgart, studied economics, anti-fascist resistance, defected to the Red Army in 1943, attended the Antifa school in Taliza and returned to Berlin in 1947.

Research assistant at Humboldt University, doctorate in 1963, habilitation in 1972. Up to

After retiring in 1983, he worked at the Central Institute for History of the Academy of Sciences of the GDR. In addition to Nazi research, his work focused on the labor movement, the history of the Soviet Union and revisionism. The leadership collective of the SED, with Walter Ulbricht as the first man, led a determined and flexible fight to defend a Marxist-Leninist political line of the SED. As a result, Walter Ulbricht very soon not only came under fire from the class enemy in Bonn, but also found himself increasingly forced to fall victim

to avoid and render harmless those whose origins lay not in the West but in the East.

Until Khrushchev's fall in October 1964, Ulbricht had to walk a tightrope that required the highest level of political mastery; He had to constantly oppose and fend off Khrushchev's massive efforts to bring the SED as well as the Polish and Hungarian parties on a revisionist course, while at the same time thwarting all attempts to drive wedges between the SED and the CPSU or to cast doubt on the GDR's reliable friendship to become part of the Soviet Union.

Later, on the basis of Soviet documents, it will hopefully be possible to trace how often the Khrushchev squad in the CPSU attempted to overthrow Walter Ulbricht, just as they had succeeded with Rákosi in Hungary. But even without these documents, it can be proven that such an attempt was made for the first time after Stalin's death in May/June 1953, and that a new attempt was made in the wake of the XX. The CPSU party conference failed.

The last attempt was made in 1964. Khrushchev's decision was decisive that year

Strike against his most dangerous enemy, Mao Zedong and the Chinese Communist Party. He prepared a conference of communist parties for the fall of 1964, at which he wanted to obtain approval for the "excommunication" of the Chinese Communist Party from the family of communist parties.

Palmiro Togliatti traveled to the Soviet Union for this meeting with a statement that went down in the history of the workers' movement as his testament because he died suddenly on the way to the conference location. In this statement, Togliatti spoke out explicitly and forcefully against the idea

Chinese Communist Party

"excommunicate" even though he raised many critical objections to the CCP.

In the same year 1964, Khrushchev's son-in-law, Adzhubei, editor-in-chief of the government organ Izvestia, traveled to the Federal Republic of Germany, where he also had an apparently very intimate conversation with Franz Josef Strauss, because the Western press reported that he also informed Strauss about it Walter Ulbricht is supposed to break in "a terminally ill man." This was of course not meant medically, but politically, as an indication that

that Walter Ulbricht's political downfall was imminent.

The year 1964 was to be the year of Khrushchev's triumph over his most stubborn and dangerous opponents. Instead, it was the year of Khrushchev's final downfall.

In order to force Walter Ulbricht from the top of the SED, Khrushchev and his contacts in the GDR used the differences of opinion and personal animosity that existed within the party leadership to bring about a Politburo and Central Committee majority against Ulbricht. That was the background for the "affairs" that resulted in the exclusion of Rudolf Herrnstadt

and Wilhelm Zaisser in 1953 and Karl Schirdewans and Ernst Wollwebers in 1958 from the leadership and from the party (Herrnstadt/Zaisser) ended.

My personal view is that most of the comrades who opposed Walter Ulbricht at that time did not do so out of a revisionist spirit - they were mostly comrades who had proven themselves to be communists and anti-fascist resistance fighters - but rather they acted in ignorance of it that they represented chess pieces in a game completely foreign to their interests. On the other hand, it was of course not possible for Walter Ulbricht

Background information that he himself, as one of the most experienced top officials of the Communist International, was certainly aware of and had to explain to the Central Committee or even just to the Politburo.

Because of all this, the possibilities of countering the basic revisionist decisions of the CPSU leadership were extremely limited. Nevertheless, the SED was one of the parties that adopted pro-revisionist resolutions and decisions from Moscow with a noticeable lack of commitment, but broadly popularized and supported all anti-revisionist statements

They provided intensive member training.

That was in 1955

"Reconciliation" with Tito; It had to be implemented willy-nilly, but not without demanding the price of breaking the Hallstein doctrine through the recognition of the GDR, which Tito finally felt forced to give in to on October 15, 1957.

However, this did not prevent the SED leadership from immediately spreading two sharp criticisms of the revisionism of the Tito party by Soviet authors in the GDR.<sup>3</sup>

The behavior towards the XXth is similar. Party conference, in particular



Khrushchev's secret speech. It was not published in any press organ or any other way in the GDR. Its main content was only communicated in a short version at party meetings.

As a large part of the party membership on the XX. When the party congress reacted exactly as Khrushchev and his people had intended - namely by calling for a broad discussion about the mistakes of the past - the party leadership resisted this and oriented itself towards

to correct and overcome "the mistakes in moving forward".

Many were dissatisfied with this and felt that the party leadership was simply avoiding accounting for its own mistakes; To them, the "reckoning with the past," as it was carried out in Gomulka's Poland, seemed to be exactly the right and necessary thing. Only when the negative consequences of such an approach became apparent in Poland and then in the Hungarian counter-revolution of autumn 1956 did the behavior of the party leadership gradually again find the approval of a solid majority in the party. But a significant proportion, especially among intellectuals, remained dissatisfied with it

– as they thought – "stifling" criticism. In the party as well as in the population, the XX. Party congress aroused sentiments that had previously been correctly characterized as petty-bourgeois liberalism, but which were now expressed by the XX. Party congress had, so to speak, received the "higher orders" as the better, non-dogmatic, free and forward-looking way of thinking and feeling. Despite this growing pressure on the party leadership, it consistently stuck to its line, moving away from the concrete tasks of socialist construction through endless

"Discussions about errors" should not be a distraction

let.

In summary, it can be said: The SED leadership believed that it had to follow the revisionist basic decisions of the Soviet leadership during the Khrushchev period. In this respect, the SED membership and the population were also infected by the revisionist falsification of Marxism-Leninism and the history of the socialist states.

What was and is doubly disastrous is that this departure from Marxism-Leninism was successfully seen as the exact opposite of it, namely as a restoration and

further development of Marxism-Leninism. On the one hand, when there was still time to resist leaving the truly Marxist-Leninist path, this prevented this resistance; and on the other hand, it prevents today from recognizing the real causes of the collapse of the socialist states, because this collapse was supposedly the result of the insistence on the Marxist-Leninist path.

Nevertheless, it would be wrong to describe the SED as a revisionist party. Under the leadership of Walter

Ulbricht, this party offered the maximum resistance possible at the time against the revisionism of the Khrushchev clique and contributed significantly to Khrushchev's overthrow in October 1964. She has also made important contributions to theoretical insights into socialist construction in various areas, which will be of great use in the future when a new beginning is made.

An example: The revisionists used the strength of the labor movement and socialism as an argument for weakening the

class struggle. For precisely this purpose, the Khrushchev team in the Soviet Union vastly exaggerated the successes of socialist construction and trivialized the difficulties, as can be seen in the example of the adventurous promise of the highest standard of living in the world in the Soviet Union in ten years and the highest in the world in twenty years to have achieved communism.

Molotov had already acted against this line of promise of communism in a very short time. Among the charges against him was the accusation that Molotov had opposed the theory that the Soviet Union was already on that path

paths to communism; In contrast, he declared that the foundations of socialism had only just been established in the Soviet Union<sup>4</sup>; He also objected to the statement that the victory of socialism in the Soviet Union could no longer be reversed.

This means that Leninists in the CPSU like Molotov had freed themselves from the old idea that the establishment of the foundations of socialist society would immediately initiate the transition to communism, while the revisionists were attached to the unrealistic talk about building communism

demagogic reasons - even after Khrushchev's fall.

Walter Ulbricht spoke against this in a lecture on the significance of Karl Marx's work for the creation of the system of socialism at the international scientific conference on the 100th anniversary of the

»Kapitals« in September 1967 in Berlin.<sup>5</sup> In this lecture, Walter Ulbricht summarized the international and his own experiences in building socialism and came to the conclusion, which had not been expressed anywhere before, »that socialism is not a short-term transitional phase in the development of society ,

but a relatively independent socio-economic formation in the historical stage of the transition from capitalism to communism on a world scale."<sup>6</sup>

This statement was a clear objection to the constant talk in the Soviet Union about the proximity of the "the bright heights of communism," and it was definitely understood that way there.

Under the leadership of Walter Ulbricht, ways were systematically sought to place the socialist planned economy on a firm scientific foundation. He demanded and enforced that the GDR's experts deal with this

to familiarize themselves with the current scientific and technical peaks in the world and to develop proposals as to how the gap to this highest level could be made up in the socialist countries.<sup>7</sup> But because this could only be achieved through a collective effort by all socialist countries, the GDR delegation was part of the CMEA was one of those who pushed most and most persistently for CMEA to be developed into a truly effective management body for international, planned cooperation between all member states.<sup>8</sup> However, the prerequisite for the success of such efforts would have been that

At the head of all communist parties in the member countries were Marxist-Leninists, i.e. real internationalists. Unfortunately that wasn't the case.

No socialism can be built with revisionists, no internationalist cooperation with "national communists," and no unity of the socialist community of states with saboteurs of unity.

What effect did the change from Ulbricht to Honecker have in the GDR?

It goes without saying that Erich Honecker is the upright communist and anti-fascist who is victorious by the revenge justice system

Those persecuted by West German imperialism deserve all our sympathy and solidarity. We were pleased to see that with his speech in court he proved himself worthy of the tradition of Karl Liebknecht and Georgi Dimitroff and became the accuser of those who wanted to label him a criminal and representative of a criminal regime. Honecker never thought of handing the GDR over to imperialism. Everything he did was about securing the existence of the GDR. In this crucial point he was not inferior to Walter Ulbricht, at least subjectively.

However, this should not lead us to take a sober,

to forgo self-critical consideration of the development of the SED and the GDR under Honecker's leadership.

Of course, the replacement of Ulbricht and the change to Honecker did not take place without the influence of the Moscow leadership. Nevertheless, it would be wrong to see this change as a change from a Marxist-Leninist to a revisionist. Rather, it was the change from one of the most experienced and gifted leaders of the German and international communist movement in the class struggle to one who was full of the best intentions but easily went astray due to weak leadership qualities

leading party official. If you look over the almost twenty years in which Honecker was at the head of the SED and the state, you have to realize that he represented a policy that was extremely contradictory in all areas and that moved along an overall downward trend.

The latter, however, applies to all socialist states in Europe and is therefore not primarily to be blamed for any mistakes made by the party and state leadership he led.

The question remains: Was the defeat of socialism inevitable?

No, it was not inevitable if the Marxist-Leninists

The advance of revisionism would have been nipped in the bud, i.e. already during the rehabilitation of Tito or on the XXth century. Party congress of the CPSU. At the very latest, Khrushchev's true role should have been revealed when he was deposed in 1964. Yes, defeat was inevitable because the revisionists were allowed to capture and remain in the party leadership. Because the fight against imperialism can only be carried out successfully if it does not find any allies in its own camp.

It will take a long time for this truth to become common knowledge again

will have become communists.

It is our task to accelerate this process so that the communist movement can once again become a powerful force in history, even before imperialism has driven humanity to ruin.

See: Kurt Gossweiler: Background of June 17, 1953, in: Marxist Sheets 3/1993, pp. 77-83

Hermann Matern at the 33rd Central Committee Plenum of the SED, October 16-19, 1957: "We informed the Yugoslav comrades along the party line that the diplomatic recognition of the militaristic West Germany by Yugoslavia and the non-recognition of the German Democratic Republic is untenable. «

As a supplement to Unit Issue 1, January 1957,

an article by A. Romyantsev appeared: Socialist reality and the "theories" of Comrade E. Kardelj. – An article by Fedoseyev/Pomelow/Cheprakov appeared as a supplement to Issue 4, April 1958, of the Unit: About the draft program of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia, both translations from the Soviet magazine Kommunist.

On the XXII. At the party conference, Mikoyan made the following accusation: In a speech in 1956, Molotov "openly doubted that the socialist society was built in the USSR." He said that in the Soviet Union "the foundations of socialist society have been established."

Mikoyan comments: "You will understand that on the basis of such theses you cannot even think of a plan to build communism."

(Die Presse der

Soviet Union, No. 129/1961, p. 2804)

Walter Ulbricht: The meaning of the work

"Capital" by Karl Marx for the creation of the developed social system of socialism in the GDR and the fight against the state monopoly system of rule in West Germany, Berlin 1967

loc. cit., p. 38

See: Sahra Wagenknecht: Marxism and Opportunism. Fights in the socialist movement yesterday and today, in: Weißenseer Blätter 4/1992, p. 13/14. – Wolfgang Berger, On the main causes of the downfall of the GDR, in: ibid., pp. 29 to 33

See: Kurt Gossweiler: Did socialism have no chance after 1945? in: Weißenseer Blätter 2/1991, p. 56

Norbert Podewin

Ulbricht did not want a trial against the Federal President

Norbert Podewin, born in 1935, apprenticed as a mechanic at VEB Narva, later there and then at VEB Elektroprojekt, company newspaper editor, distance learning course at Humboldt University, graduated as a qualified historian in 1965. Since 1962 he has worked for the National Council of the National Front and co-author of the "Brown Book of the Nazis", which was first published in 1965.

and war criminals in the Federal Republic of Germany and in West Berlin. Personal advisor to the Deputy Chairman of the State Council, Friedrich Ebert, from 1971 until Ulbricht's death in 1973 and the election of Willi Stoph as Chairman of the State Council. 1974 Secretary for International Relations in the National Council of the National Front, from 1980 to 1989 member of the Presidium. Active as a journalist since 1990.

At the end of 1961 I received an invitation from the National Council of the National Front of Democratic Germany. I should come for an interview. My connection

Until then, my involvement with the National Front had been limited to me voting for their candidates in elections. Gerhard Dengler received me in the National Council building, the official residence of Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels until the fall of the Third Reich. He introduced himself as the person responsible for the western area, which was currently being developed, in the National Council. He briefly introduced the second participant as follows: "You know Comrade Albert Norden well."

I knew his name from the media and knew that he was a relentless Nazi hunter and for the

"Committee for German Unity"

was responsible. The committee was formed in 1954 by decision of the Council of Ministers and, as a state institution, was intended to deal with all issues relating to the preparation of reunification and the conclusion of a peace treaty. This committee has been dissolved, said Dengler, but its archive and several employees are now available to the western area of the National Council. I should work there in the future.

The offer was tempting in several respects and did not require any time to think about it. But I wanted to know how to appeal to me of all people

came? Albert Norden responded to this. »The show is on the RIAS

'From the zone for the zone', and they always cite the impulse as a critical organ. We thought there must be something to the editor!"

The person responsible for agitation in the Lichtenberg SED district leadership had repeatedly warned me about this. Here things were obviously seen differently.

Since the beginning of 1962, all employees at the new National Council workplace have had to undertake a major task: preparation for the National Congress on 16/17. June in Berlin. Walter Ulbricht was aware of this appointment

elected - June 17th was a national holiday in the Federal Republic of Germany and the western city of Berlin.

The GDR, unlike there, did not want to shed tears, but rather spoke demonstratively about the prospects of German-German relations.

In the National Council we listed the facts about this problem again. This was the continuation of the Soviet and GDR offers over the last ten years:

March 10, 1952: USSR proposal with a draft peace treaty for a sovereign, neutral, unified Germany;

February 3, 1954: Offer from

GDR to the FRG to hold a referendum in both German states on the general treaty for a European Defense Community (EDC) or a peace treaty;

September 4, 1958: GDR appeal to the four victorious powers to conduct peace treaty negotiations involving the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR;

November 10, 1958: Soviet Germany proposals for a

Peace treaty and the settlement of the West Berlin problem;

August 4, 1961: Proposal from the Greater Berlin Magistrate to the Berlin/West Senate to regulate the cross-border commuter issue;

August 23, 1961: Opening of pass offices at the Zoological Garden/Charlottenburg S-Bahn stations (territory of the GDR Reichsbahn), which were illegally closed a short time later by the Berlin/West police.

In the run-up to the National Congress, the 15th meeting of the SED Central Committee from March 21 to 23, 1962 discussed the document "The Historical Task of the GDR and the Future of Germany," which was then handed over to the National Council. He took the text as a draft and published it across the republic. All committees were asked to discuss this with citizens at local level and to make suggestions for changes.

At the same time, the National Council appealed to all citizens of the Federal Republic and West Berlin to take part in the debate. We employees were responsible

for the course of the conference - it took place in the banquet hall of the House of Ministries on March 25th. There I met Walter Ulbricht in person for the first time. His speech was emotional. In it he addressed "all citizens of the German Democratic Republic! To the entire German nation!" and succinctly outlined the course of German history since the beginning of the organized labor movement. However, Ulbricht placed the emphasis on the opportunities after the defeat of fascism that had not been used.

Nevertheless, he stuck to the unity of Germany, which for him could only be socialist. Ulbricht

referred to the text of the national document. "Our goal is to maintain peace, to turn the nation's fortunes around for the better and to lead the whole of Germany to new prosperity."

I was surprised that Walter Ulbricht referred to Goethe and quoted from "Faust": "I would like to see such a crowd, to stand on free ground with free people! For the moment I can say: stay a while, you are so beautiful! ... In anticipation of such high happiness, I am now enjoying the highest moment.«

»The victory of socialism in the German Democratic Republic and

The unification of the entire German people in a unified, peace-loving, democratic and socialist state will conclude this third part of Faust. And this final chapter, dear comrades and friends and dear guests from West Germany, will be shaped together by the citizens of the German Democratic Republic and the citizens of the West German Federal Republic - united as brothers."

The conference was followed by a three-month public debate, and there were also approving comments from the Federal Republic. On June 16, 1962, the

National Congress of the National Front in the Dynamo sports hall. In addition to 2,332 elected delegates, around 350 guests from the Federal Republic and West Berlin attended. At the beginning, Wolfgang Langhoff, director of the German Theater and once a prisoner in the Börgermoor concentration camp, recited Johannes R. Becher's "The Historical Home of the German."

They were words that touched deeply. National Council President Erich Correns reported on the discussion of the document, which millions had approved. Then the scientist Manfred von Ardenne and the Thuringian regional bishop Moritz spoke

Mitzenheim, the writer Willy Bredel, the union official Kurt Feustel from the Federal Republic of Germany and representatives from GDR companies. They all stated in one way or another: The National Document shows the perspective of German-German coexistence. Walter Ulbricht and Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl in the executive committee were satisfied

I was a member of the editorial team. During a break in the meeting, it discussed how the proposed changes that were still being received should be dealt with. I argued spiritedly against a suggestion

when the door opened behind my back. Walter Ulbricht sat down with us. "Do not feel disturbed."

Despite the request, the group remained silent, and I didn't continue my speech either. Ulbricht said:

»The young comrade had a problem, yes. So what was it?"

I stated my suggestion again. No one responded. Except for Ulbricht.

"What the young comrade is suggesting sounds sensible."

Suddenly everyone else saw it that way too.

In the period that followed - I'm getting ahead of myself - I was to meet Ulbricht repeatedly. As an employee Albert

In the north I sat in the working group that researched war and Nazi criminals. Remembering this encounter, Ulbricht always greeted me with the formula: "Ah, the young comrade."

On the afternoon of June 17, 1962, the delegates to the National Congress unanimously adopted the National Document, which aimed at a German-German confederation. "It would be particularly important" – is the core statement – "to secure peace for the German people throughout the entire transition period within the framework of such a confederation. The two German states – in one

Confederacy linked together - didn't need armor. The Confederation could agree on complete disarmament in Germany, the ban on atomic and nuclear weapons on German soil, and the neutrality of the German states. We could begin immediately to bring about a minimum of good, decent and solid relations between the two German states.

As is well known, this idea turned out to be unfeasible. The national and international class relations were contrary to this.

When processing the

At that time, Federal President Heinrich Lübke became increasingly focused on the Nazi past. He had been in office since 1959. We had determined that he had worked as a surveyor and construction manager at the Walter Schlempp architectural and engineering office from 1939 until the end of the war.

This was under the control of Albert Speer, Hitler's intimate and Reich Minister for Armaments and Ammunition. Lübke's signature was found among construction drawings for barracks in which concentration camp slaves were housed, and from 1943 to 1945, as construction manager of the Peenemünde Army Research Institute, he was responsible for the use of concentration camp

prisoners.

This is also what it said in the brown book that was first published in 1965. When presenting the documentation, Albert Norden referred to relevant evidence and offered the Federal Republic of Germany access to the files so that the Federal President's naturally doctored official biography could be adapted to reality.

At the press conference in the summer of 1965, Albert Norden called Lübke a "concentration camp builder" and asked rhetorically how this past could be reconciled with the Federal Republic of Germany's claim to be a democratic, constitutional state.

In the West it was no different

expect, dismissed.

At the end of 1965 a report came from the Halle district. A man had found a number of documents in his parents' estate in the attic of his house that showed that a senior engineer, Heinrich Lübke, was responsible for the construction of underground production facilities in 1944 as part of the "Hunter Program." Airplane fuselages were to be produced bomb-proof in disused salt mines. In a protocol dated September 5, 1944, both the presence of the qualified engineer Lübke and his assignment were recorded: "It was stipulated that the

Camp is divided into a) 1,000 concentration camp men, b) 1,000 concentration camp women, c) 500 foreigners. One wooden barracks had already been built, three more will be built in the course of the week. Norden once again offered Bonn access to the files. From there came an immediate rejection. In September 1967, however, the Bavarian State Chancellery requested the Lübke documents by telex from the headquarters of the Berlin People's Police. In Albert Norden's office, people were undecided: was the interest genuine, or was it a provocation? I received the order to go to Munich and get copies of the documents from the Friedrich law firm

To hand over the notarized Lübke documents to Karl Kaul. Horst Brasch, Vice President of the National Council, gave me his company car, a Tatra 603.

At the border crossing, the Federal Border Guard officers asked me to open the package of files. I refused, pointing out the recipient: "Bavarian State Chancellery Munich."

I had to wait for some time. Apparently there were phone calls back and forth before I was told I could continue driving with the unopened package.

In Munich my black one excited me

Tatra was a bit astonished, a car like this and with a license plate like this had never been seen there before. I was warmly welcomed in the Secretariat of the State Chancellery and an official thanked me for delivering the requested shipment. However, he had trouble getting me a confirmation of receipt because he stubbornly refused to include the origin "German Democratic Republic" in it, which I just as stubbornly insisted on. Finally we agreed on the formula that these were documents from the holdings of the National Council of the National Front of Democratic Germany,

and add the Berlin address of the GDR institution.

The reasons for the Bavarian request remained obscure, but we suspected that the CSU chairman Franz Josef Strauss, who had been federal finance minister in the grand coalition in Bonn since the previous year, was behind it. He had made no secret of his dislike for Heinrich Lübke.

Maybe he wanted to get ammunition to "shoot" him.

For me the result of the business trip was poor, but not for Norden. He now thought the way was clear for a trial before the GDR's Supreme Court. In 1960 they had against the

Federal Expellees Minister Theodor Oberländer and State Secretary Hans Globke were tried in 1963 and both were sentenced in absentia to life imprisonment. Now the Federal President should be put in the dock.

For such a "show trial" – Albert Norden used this term offensively: the world should watch – we needed the highest level of consent. In October 1967, Walter Ulbricht asked us to come to him. He greeted us friendly. "Ah, the young comrade."

Albert Norden argued in favor of a trial, then I spoke for about twenty minutes and spoke passionately

about the value of the documents found. Ulbricht thanked us, thought for a moment and then said the sentence that surprised us: "Well, comrades, let's not do that!" And he also explained his reluctance.

He had less of an eye on Lübke as a person and more on the co-governing SPD. She would inevitably have to protect herself in front of her head of state, perhaps against her convictions, if the GDR were to fire her legally. Reasons of state dictate that. In this way we would also damage Vice Chancellor Willy Brandt and the party, which he does not approve of

could. That's why it seemed politically more sensible to him not to conduct a trial like Globke and Oberländer.

"Make a new edition of the brown book and be good."

In October 1968, Lübke gave up in frustration and announced that he was leaving

Not being available for re-election for "health reasons". The "concentration camp builder campaign," as it was called internally, by the Federal Republic of Germany media prompted him to take this step.

Ulbricht's decision turned out to be correct. Even without a trial, we achieved our goal.

Loni Günther

Letter to Ollenhauer and Ulbricht's fight for German unity

Loni Günther, born in 1928, SED in 1946, head of the women's department in the Thuringia state leadership of the SED, member of the Thuringian state parliament from 1950 to 1952. From 1953 to 1966 employee

Deputy head of the agitation department of the SED Central Committee, then secretary of the SED Suhl district leadership until 1989.

As a 19-year-old comrade, I experienced him for the first time on November 9, 1947

"Henneberger Haus" in Suhl. Karl Liebknecht had already spoken there in September 1911. The local press noted that Ulbricht's remarks focused on economic policy issues. We young people, on the other hand, were more interested in what he said about us, the young generation, and our perspectives. Ulbricht's speech inspired me so much that I hesitated as to whether I should become a new teacher to introduce children to the new times or whether I should train to be a people's judge in order to settle accounts with the old times

To bring Nazi and war criminals to justice.

But firstly, things turned out differently, and secondly, than you think, as they say. I was no exception.

In the mid-1960s, it was midsummer and on a Saturday, when I had to work until noon, I received a call from my boss. Could I come to him quickly?

So I quickly hurried across the long corridors to Otto Funke, the 1st.

Secretary of the Suhl district management, and tortured my brain about what I might have missed or done wrong, because that is certainly the case

Experience from anyone who has ever worked in the party apparatus or in a party newspaper: When the first person called for you, there was usually a lot of trouble.

We called for a public discussion in the Freie Wort, the organ of the district management. Readers should share their opinions on local political problems and write where their concerns are. The campaign was significantly called "Pitt Stöber". Had Funke discovered something in the published letters to the editor that caught his eye? Had he heard something that was not in the spirit of the party? Not even close. My worries were completely misplaced.

»We would like you to accompany Comrade Walter Ulbricht and his wife Lotte on a visit to the Steinbach-Langenbach Nature Theater this afternoon. Of course you also have to take your husband Alwin with you." We would certainly have a lot to talk about, said Funke, about the FDGB work and about the construction of the Suhl trade union building, which was obviously close to Ulbricht's heart...

For me, this task seemed too big. What could I tell the first man of our party and Chairman of the State Council?

"Otto, that's not possible. Who will pick up my daughter from kindergarten?"

"Look after her until we get back?"

"Don't worry, Friedel will do it, my wife."

On the way from Suhl to Oberhof, where I was supposed to pick up the two of them at the "Haus am Waldesrand" guesthouse not far from the Kanzlersgrund, I remembered the various encounters with Ulbricht. In particular, there was that short working meeting in mid-February 1954 when I was summoned to him together with Willi Bamberger, deputy editor-in-chief of the unit. He informed us about a letter addressed to

Party executive of the SPD and the members of this party. In it, the social democratic comrades were called upon to support, together with the KPD and the DGB, the current proposals for resolving the German question and to discuss a treaty on collective security in Europe. The letter from the Central Committee, as Ulbricht explained to us, was an immediate reaction to the conference of foreign ministers of the four powers that had been running in Berlin since January 25th and had so far achieved nothing (it was supposed to end inconclusively on February 18th). In the broadest sense, it was about unity of action

of forces for reunification. In the run-up to the conference, the "Committee for German Unity" was formed by the GDR Council of Ministers.

And on the other hand, it was an attempt to stop the remilitarization of the Federal Republic. In a few days, the Bundestag wanted to pass a military constitution law that would clear the way for the introduction of general conscription. I'm getting ahead of myself: This law and the associated amendment to the Basic Law passed on January 26th.

February the Bundestag and on March 19th the Bundesrat. The Western powers in the form of the Allied High Commission

Although they had made the restriction that this law could only come into force once the European Defense Community (EDC) had been founded, that was just shadow boxing. This Western European army with German participation was destined to fail in the French National Assembly in the summer of 1954 because people there still had vivid memories of the German occupation that had ended only ten years earlier.

The Federal Republic was then accepted into the North Atlantic Treaty, which made it clear what the supposed reservation of the Western powers had been worth in the spring of 1954: namely, nothing.

Ulbricht explained to us the tactical and strategic context of Western politics and his own thoughts on how to react to it, which made my ears glow, just 25 years old. It was clear to me: Ulbricht's perspective was that of a German politician who had the whole of Germany in mind. He felt responsible for all Germans and wanted to prevent the cementing of the division that would inevitably occur if the Federal Republic were to be integrated into a Western military alliance. He wanted that with all peace-loving, democratic forces

prevent in Germany. That's why he hoped for support from the SPD. Since the death of the anti-communist Schumacher, it has been led for about a year and a half by Erich Ollenhauer, who failed as his party's candidate for chancellor in the federal elections a few months ago with 28.8 percent. But: He went into the election campaign with a clear oppositional stance that was directed against the Adenauer line: no to Western integration, yes to reunification. Ulbricht now wanted to build on that.

We should keep the letter, the contents of which clearly bore Ulbricht's handwriting

bring the SPD headquarters, which is common

"Bonn Barracks" was called. The federal party headquarters was a barrack-like building on Friedrich-Ebert-Allee that the SPD rented at the beginning of the 1950s in order to deliberately emphasize the provisional nature. After the party's reunification, the board wanted to immediately move the headquarters to the old and new capital, Berlin.

And why did Ulbricht choose both of us for the mission? I could only explain it that way because the editorial team of Vorwärts, Bamberger and others, also worked in the barracks

Günther visited colleagues, so to speak. But we didn't even get to the editorial office. A Cerberus at the entrance to the SPD headquarters, who sat behind a desk like a palace guard, did not let us in and also refused to accept our letter. We then put the envelope on the table and left.

The man angrily grabbed the envelope and threw it at us.

On February 19, 1954, Neue Deutschland published the text of this letter, the acceptance of which had been refused two days earlier at the SPD headquarters.

On April 7th, less than seven weeks

After Ulbricht's offer, at the request of the Adenauer government, the German Bundestag rejected the recognition of the German Democratic Republic - the name of which was generally not used, but only referred to in a derogatory manner as "Eastern Zone" or "Pankow" - and decided on the claim to sole representation for all Germans. A state secretary named Hallstein was soon to couch this position in a doctrine that also included sanctions against third countries that acted against this West German arrogance and established relations with the GDR. First the SPD-led government under Willy Brandt

was supposed to end this anachronism in 1969. In his first government statement, the Chancellor spoke of two states in Germany, taking up the so-called two-state theory with which Ulbricht and Khrushchev responded to Bonn's claim to sole representation in 1954. During his visit to Berlin on July 26, 1955, the Soviet General Secretary declared: Two sovereign German states have emerged on the territory of the German Reich, which collapsed ten years ago. Reunification is therefore solely a matter for the Germans and should come first

a rapprochement between the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany, whereby the socialist achievements of the GDR must be preserved...

We had something to talk about on the drive to the natural stage in Steinbach-Langenbach. Walter Ulbricht could definitely remember this mission ten years ago; he vividly reflected on our encounter at that time and the development that followed, which was not in the interest of most Germans in the West and East.

The stage in the gorge on Heubachweg was created in the 1950s through voluntary work by Thuringians, including those there

Stationed Soviet soldiers had a hand in it, which is why it was also called the "German-Soviet Friendship Natural Stage". Thuringia's largest theater in the countryside was built as part of the National Development Project (NAW).

Walter and Lotte Ulbricht were warmly greeted at the entrance by local dignitaries and shown to the – admittedly somewhat uncomfortable – benches.

With sore buttocks, we saw Millöcker's Bettelstudent, an operetta in three acts. After the performance there were informal conversations with the actors from the Meininger Theater, which has run for 35 seasons

was to play on this stage for a long time, until 1991.

Cosmopolitanism

Günter Tschirschwitz

The first state visit to Prague

Günter Tschirschwitz, born in 1930, the son of Silesian farm workers, joined the German People's Police in March 1949. After the Ministry of State Security was formed, he came to personal security. He worked there until the 80s. He repeatedly accompanied Walter Ulbricht on trips abroad. In his final years of service, he headed the MfS's "Care" working group. He

resigned from the armed forces as a lieutenant colonel on February 28, 1990.

When and why did you get involved in personal security?

In the spring of 1951 I applied to attend the VP Officers' School. In the summer I was ordered to Berlin when the III. World Festival of Youth and Students took place. There, as ordered, I reported to the Training Headquarters (HVA) in Adlershof, who immediately sent me on to Lichtenberg on Normannenstrasse. The squad leader and... were waiting for me there

his deputy, Chief Inspector Erich Wichert, and Inspector Richard Bein.

They said that with my 1.83 meters I was suitable for personal protection.

Without knowing what that meant, I agreed and was immediately promoted to chief sergeant. In the afternoon, an employee accompanied me to Freiwalder Strasse in Hohenschönhausen and introduced me to Chief Inspector Franz Gold, who was the head of the PS department. In the first few months I worked in the director's office, but was soon assigned to security operations. My first major deployment took place in October 1951.

The trip to Prague was your first trip abroad. Tell me.

It was the first GDR state visit to Czechoslovakia. President Klement Gottwald had invited our President Wilhelm Pieck, who was also accompanied by Walter Ulbricht. We traveled by government train. There were two incidents of a lighter nature. As we passed through Saxon Switzerland, the chassis of the saloon car began to squeak murderously.

Apparently the bearings had not been sufficiently greased. That then had consequences. But to be honest: the only one who

What really upset me about it was my boss Franz Gold.

And the second breakdown: Walter Ulbricht went to the toilet but couldn't get the door open. "Comrade General Secretary," I said eagerly,

"Can I help?" He waved her hand. »Come on, I'm a carpenter. I know how to deal with swollen wood!" Ulbricht hit the locking door in two or three places with his large hands, a strong jerk – and it opened.

And Prague. What happened there?

In total we were twelve bodyguards, six were part of the security detail - I was there

there - and the others to the object command. This secured the castle-like building in which the delegation was housed. If they were on the way, one of our cars drove in front as an advance detachment, and our rear detachment formed the rear of the convoy. There were a number of appointments at Hradcany, meetings with working people, wreath-laying, receptions and other protocol obligations.

What was the most exciting thing for you?

Honestly?

Of course.

The catering. Six years after the war there was still not much to eat; food was rationed and only given out on a card. The Czechoslovakian hosts looked after us and we felt – as they say – like God in France.

When they left, each bodyguard received a pair of shoes and a coat from the people of Prague. We were eternally grateful to them.

When did you meet Ulbricht again?

Less than five weeks later. On December 8, 1951, the German Building Academy was opened with a state ceremony in the Admiralspalast. I was

in the box with President Pieck, Walter Ulbricht and Berlin's mayor Friedrich Ebert as well as the academy president Kurt Liebknecht. The architect was the grandson of Wilhelm Liebknecht and nephew of Karl Liebknecht. He was to head the institution



for ten years, which was located on Hannoversche Strasse until 1973. Then the permanent representation of the Federal Republic of Germany moved there. Today it is the second headquarters of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the first is still in Bonn.

Heinz Eichler

Extremely correct and with a strong sense of justice

Heinz Eichler, born in 1927, communist parents, father a fighter against fascism, commercial apprenticeship until he was called up for the Reich Labor Service, briefly US prisoner of war, 1945 KPD, 1946 SED, 1946/47 visit the Workers and Farmers Faculty, studied economics at the from 1947 to 1950

University of Leipzig, graduate in economics, employee in the Ulbricht Secretariat from 1950 to 1956, then studied at the party college in Moscow until 1960, then personal assistant to the Chairman of the State Council, from 1971 to 1990 Secretary of the State Council and member of the Presidium of the People's Chamber.

You already knew Walter Ulbricht when he was Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl's first deputy. You were his personal advisor and secretary of the State Council until his death. What was he like as a boss?

Before I answer the question, I would like to make it clear that it is exclusively my personal experiences and experiences that I am recounting here. I know that there are people who hold different views and associate other personal experiences with the name Walter Ulbricht.

But on the question of what he was like as a boss: extremely correct. He had a strong sense of justice. I was impressed that he knew how to always place details in an appropriate social context. His tasks were specific.

I met him personally for the first time in February 1951. Otto Gotsche, head of his secretariat at the time, introduced me to him. I have processed submissions from industry and agriculture. He took suggestions and criticism from the public very seriously. Did you also have encounters with him outside of work?

In 1960 I went to Crimea with my wife for a treatment at my own expense. One day his interpreter Werner Eberlein called me and picked me up. Walter Ulbricht, who was also in Crimea, wanted to see me. He was interested in the living conditions of Soviet citizens. For the

At the end of our conversation he said goodbye to me with the words:

»All the best, best health and success in your studies and see you again in Berlin.« This made it clear to me where I would work after my studies.

It is said that Ulbricht used the confidential "you" very sparingly. How was your relationship?

As was usual in the SED, he addressed me as "Du". I said

"Comrade Walter" to him.

What was the personal relationship between Prime Minister Grotewohl and his first deputy?

If you consider that both came from different streams of the workers' movement, that they were under constant criticism from the West because of their contribution to the unification of the KPD and SPD to form the SED, and that they were themselves subject to excessive work pressure, then you can only admire the mutual respect with which they showed each other met. Grotewohl was more of an esthete, Ulbricht the practical one. Both complemented each other excellently. The interests of the working people were their most important concern.

How did the State Council come about?

After the death of President Wilhelm Pieck in 1960, the State Council was approved by the People's Chamber through a constitutional amendment. In effect, he was the collective head of state of the republic. It included representatives of all parties and mass organizations.

In this respect, it was a large state coalition of all anti-fascist democratic forces in the GDR.

The political justification is still interesting to me today. The law establishing the State Council began like this:

»Carried by the great responsibility for maintaining peace, for the socialist future

of the German Democratic Republic, for the further consolidation and development of the socialist social order and for the rebirth of Germany as a peace-loving, democratic and unified state, it is decided to form the State Council of the German Democratic Republic.

President Wilhelm Pieck is remembered by many for his kind, fatherly manner. As Chairman of the State Council, Ulbricht had a difficult time gaining this recognition. How do you remember this time?

Radio and later television

were cross-border. The Western media did everything to discredit Ulbricht. They used appearances as an excuse, such as his high voice due to illness and his strong Saxon dialect.

In fact, they attacked his policies. They knew that he thought and acted strategically, which was good for the GDR and socialism. In my opinion, Ulbricht was increasingly recognized by the population as the father of the country.

You accompanied him on trips abroad. How did he negotiate?

Walter Ulbricht could be very diplomatic, but also very direct,

when it came to the interests of the GDR. He was always well prepared and informed himself in advance about the specific problems between the GDR and the respective country he was visiting. This was particularly true for the Comecon countries.

You accompanied him on two trips that caused a stir at the time: to Egypt in 1965 and to Yugoslavia in 1964. How did he get along with President Nasser?

I was impressed by how well the communist Ulbricht and the national democrat Nasser got along with each other. They referred to each other as friends. This was also a novelty at the time because the Federal Republic still had the Hallstein

doctrine and did everything to prevent the GDR from being recognized under international law. Egypt's President Nasser, as we would say today, leaned way out of the window.

Without Tito's solidarity, the trip to Egypt could not have taken place, as the Western powers did not grant permission to fly over NATO countries. Therefore only the sea route remained. Tito was ready

"Friendship of Nations" to leave Dubrovnik for a trip to Egypt.

How do you remember the encounters between Ulbricht and Tito?

Yugoslavia was in the top ten

States that recognized the GDR under international law after its founding on October 7, 1949. Josip Broz Tito and Walter Ulbricht knew each other from their emigration to Moscow. They lived there together with Wilhelm Pieck and his daughters in the Hotel Lux. Eleonore Staimer, a daughter of Wilhelm Pieck, was later to represent the GDR as ambassador to Yugoslavia.

She knew about the Yugoslavian president's fondness for German shepherds and therefore suggested to Ulbricht that he give Tito two German shepherd puppies during his state visit in 1964. She based her suggestion on the story that...

During the fascist occupation, a partisan general was approached by a German shepherd dog that wouldn't leave his side and sacrificed itself during a battle: it knocked Tito over and intercepted the shot that was supposed to hit the commander-in-chief of the Yugoslav People's Liberation Army.

Walter Ulbricht followed the suggestion. Later, Tito always kept the dogs close to him. One was in Belgrade, the other on Brioni.

Do you have personal memorabilia from your boss?

On the occasion of my twenty year anniversary with him as

As a personal employee, he presented me with a letter of recognition on December 1, 1970. I also have a handwritten text that he dedicated to his friend Nasser and a lot of photographs from that time.

When you look back on your years with Walter Ulbricht: What remains of him?

For his 75th birthday in 1968, I was involved in publishing an illustrated book about him. We called the book

"A life for Germany." He believed in the "rebirth of Germany as a peace-loving, democratic and unified state." It is different

came. But for me, the pride and satisfaction remain of having worked in trust with the most important politician in the GDR to implement a policy for the benefit of the country's citizens for the most active years of my political life.

Ewald Moldt

On the way to the Nile – seven days in the land of the Pharaohs

Ewald Moldt, born in 1927, Antifa youth committee in Greifswald, SPD in 1945, head of the youth welfare office in Greifswald from 1947 to 1950, then studied at the German Academy for Political Science and Law in Forst Zinna, entered the diplomatic service and from 1953 to 1958 was personal advisor to Foreign Minister Lothar

Bolt. He then worked at the GDR embassies in Romania and Poland until 1963, then head of the press department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and in 1965 ambassador to Bucharest. From 1970 to 1978 Deputy Foreign Minister, then, until 1988, Permanent Representative of the GDR in Bonn. After his return, he served as Deputy Foreign Minister of the GDR until 1990.

On February 21, 1965 I was in a special plane and flew to Dubrovnik with an IL 18. I was among those who met Walter Ulbricht on his official visit to the United States

Arab Republic of Egypt accompanied. As head of the press department at the Foreign Ministry, I was responsible for public relations.

Until shortly before departure - relying on inauthentic information and rumors - the Bonn government made increased diplomatic efforts to prevent this state visit. President Nasser had been invited to Bonn, but secret arms deliveries from the Federal Republic to Israel, which had become known, strained relations with the VAR and other Arab states. Restrictions in

relations with Egypt, even threats such as stopping economic aid, which was actually seen as a sanction against Ulbricht's visit

The federal government decided on March 7, 1965, but could not influence the Egyptian decision. "Friendship of Nations"<sup>1</sup> was already waiting in the port of Dubrovnik. The journey along the Adriatic coast began on February 22nd an impressive ship trip across the Mediterranean. We viewed the fact that military jets from NATO bordering states that had not granted us overflight rights flew low over us as a cheap attempt to get up

to draw attention to the Federal Republic and its role in NATO. On the 24th In February the ship entered the port of Alexandria. From ships anchored there, sailors greeted the head of state of the GDR with deafening sounds from fog horns and sirens. Hundreds of Egyptians came towards the ship on their small and completely overcrowded boats to welcome us guests with Arab warmth. Here and there you could observe a willing or unintentional jump into the water for joy. I had already made final preparations for my work area during the voyage.

Ulbricht, in good spirits, made himself available on board. Together with the accompanying GDR journalists, we went through the individual program items in peace.

Vice President Hassan Ibrahim and other leading personalities attended the official welcome. A formation of Egyptian armed forces was present and both national anthems were intoned. A special train continued along the Suez Canal towards Cairo.

The President of the United Arab Republic received us there with all honors and in a very friendly manner. The entire cabinet and members of the

diplomatic corps took part. About a thousand people showed up to cheer Walter Ulbricht.

The talks between the two presidents took place in a friendly spirit. Gamal Abdel Nasser developed his plans for a modern Egypt on the path to social progress and with an anti-imperialist orientation. He had an enviable charisma.

Walter Ulbricht provided information about the industrial development and agriculture of the GDR. He came to talk about foreign policy issues.

The Egyptian side listened particularly carefully when he explained the border between the two world systems - socialism and imperialism - which ran through the middle of Germany and was also the border between the two German states. From this he derived the GDR's responsibility for securing peace. That was well received.

Then we visited the Shibin el Kum<sup>2</sup> cotton mill. The Egyptian textile workers greeted us with exuberant, exuberant joy. The law enforcement officers had to do their best to prevent Ulbricht from getting through

expressions of friendship became short of breath. According to local custom, large numbers of women made throat sounds. With vibrating tongues they made shrill sounds thanking them for the hundred thousand spindles produced in the GDR. We visited Aswan, where a huge dam was built on the Nile<sup>3</sup>, the royal tombs in Luxor and the pyramids in Giza. Walter and Lotte Ulbricht were in good shape despite the high temperatures and the tight program.

On the final day in Cairo, President Nasser awarded the two of them the United States' highest honor

Arab Republic, the Order of the Nile. The members of the GDR delegation also received various awards depending on Egyptian appreciation.

I led the international press conference in Kubbeh Palace, the presidential residence. GDR Foreign Minister Dr. Lothar Bolz was almost bombarded with questions. Above all, it was about the friendship of both states, which was based on the commonality of their goals and interests by eliminating any imperialist interference.

Bolz emphasized that the visit was not only of great importance for bilateral relations, but also for international relations

Facts created, namely that the foreign policy blockade of the GDR by the FRG no longer works. The "Joint Declaration," signed by both heads of state, is of international and constitutional significance.

There were many questions about the agreements concluded in the economic field. The focus was on the initial tasks of the joint economic committee. Gerhard Weiß, the deputy foreign trade minister, referred to the object lists for chemical plants, metallurgical equipment and equipment included in the contracts

for the textile and printing industries. The GDR government representative for the Arab states based in Cairo, Ambassador Dr. Ernst Scholz.

Upon departure, an enthusiastic crowd lined the streets from Kubbeh Palace to the train station, decorated with flags of both countries. All members of the Council of Ministers and well-known personalities from the scientific and cultural life of the GDR as well as members of the diplomatic corps appeared. Ulbricht thanked President Nasser and

to all his Egyptian friends for treating him and his companions so openly. He will report on his impressions and experiences back home<sup>4</sup>.

The special train left Cairo with a 21-gun salute.

When they arrived in Port Said, an enthusiastic crowd was waiting for the guests from the GDR. Vice President Hassan Ibrahim, the governor of the port city and senior employees of the Suez Canal Authority were there to welcome us.

Walter Ulbricht praised the reconstruction of the city and explained that we stand in awe of the sons of

to the Egyptian people who gave their lives for the independence of their homeland in 1956 and defended the achievements of the 1952 revolution against the imperialist aggression of Great Britain, France and Israel. This was followed by a wreath-laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

The eventful program concluded with a sporting event and an interesting harbor tour. Lots of high-spirited people were dancing on the quay walls. Again and again there were cheers and the greeting concert of the ship's sirens. Walter Ulbricht and his entourage stood

for a long time on the railing on the sun deck and waved.

There was no lack of dubious attempts on the part of the West German side to devalue the importance of this trip for the international recognition of the GDR. The Hallstein Doctrine continued to be adhered to. But in diplomatic circles one could often hear opinions that it was destructive because it proved to be a hindrance in the pursuit of relaxation and understanding. In my work, particularly in Africa, I have seen how heads of state and foreign ministers have a constructive relationship with the GDR

wanted diplomatic relations, but at the same time feared that they would not be able to cope with economic sanctions from the Federal Republic of Germany. But the process of diplomatic recognition of the GDR could no longer be stopped, even if it dragged on until 1975. At the international level, including as a member of the UN since 1973, the GDR worked actively for peaceful, equal cooperation between states and for international security until the end of its existence.

The FDGB holiday ship

"Völkerfreundschaft" was built in Sweden in 1946 and initially operated on the Atlantic line as the MS Stockholm. It had 12,644 GRT and carried just under 700

passengers. The larger liner sank in a collision with the Italian "Andrea Doria", the "Stockholm" was repaired, converted and sold to the GDR, where the ship was used as a holiday ship for the FDGB on January 3, 1960 under the name "Friendship of Nations" was put into service. The "Völkerfreundschaft" sailed until 1985, when the MS "Arkona" took its place. The ship was sold, renamed "Fritjof Nansen" in 1986 and used as accommodation for asylum seekers in Oslo. In 1989 it was bought by an Italian shipowner who had it converted into a modern cruise ship. The "beautiful Italian" has been driving for a German tour operator since 2007.

The cotton mill in Shibin el Kum, 80 kilometers from Cairo, was there

100,000 spindles from the GDR were equipped. Der Spiegel, which reported on the visit in its March 3, 1975 issue,

made it clear in his diction alone how badly Bonn was affected: "The zone bailiff's eyes, half-hidden by heavy lids and otherwise sparkling so cunningly, became moist with pride and emotion. The enthusiasm exceeded anything the communist had experienced in terms of planned cheers on his state visits to Eastern Bloc countries. Individual workers allowed themselves to be beaten by the police in order not to be pushed away from him - a behavior that Ulbricht is not used to from the workers in his home country. [...] "As far as I'm concerned, it could have taken a lot longer," said Ulbricht with sincere regret when he had to leave the spinning mill after an hour."

The new Aswan Dam was built from 1960 to 1971 with Soviet help after the United States and the World Bank withdrew their financing commitments in 1956 because Egypt was the People's Republic of China

had recognized. 2,000 Soviet engineers worked on the project, which cost the equivalent of around 2.2 billion euros 30,000 workers. The reservoir is the third largest in the world.

Published about the trip to Egypt in 1965

Lotte Ulbricht, among others, "An unforgettable journey", Walter Ulbricht published the illustrated book "Friendship" in the same year. United Arab Republic - Free Land on the Nile" was published and edited by Heinz Eichler.

Gisela Höppner

What did I admire about him? How lovingly he treated Lotte

Gisela Höppner, born in 1927, born and raised in Berlin, father missing on the Eastern Front, bombed out, apprenticeship as a wholesaler, secretary at IG Metall, then FDGB instructor. After the founding of the GDR, he moved to President Wilhelm Pieck's central writing office in Niederschönhausen Castle. Then personal

Secretary to State Secretary Max Opitz, head of the Presidential Chancellery. After Wilhelm Pieck's death, the State Council was formed and transferred to the State Council's protocol department.

After Walter Ulbricht's death, worked in the protocol department of the People's Chamber.

What did you immediately notice about Walter Ulbricht?

His hands. I remember one of my first awards events in the banquet hall of the State Council Building, it was one of my first assignments there.

I stood, as was proper, one

half a step behind him. Otto Gotsche spoke, Walter Ulbricht waited so that he could hand over the 300 awards that I was supposed to give him.

As always in such moments, Ulbricht had his hands behind his back and clasped together. I studied her carefully. These large carpenter's hands fascinated me; there was something calming and gripping about them at the same time. My father was a fabric printer and he also had proletarian hands, real paws.

Gotsche finished. Ulbricht turned around, smiled at us, and that said: Well, let's do it then.

I always stood with weak knees and

he was like a rock in the surf that nothing could shake.

While we excitedly checked whether all the certificates were in the correct order, the medals - which I then had to pin on my lapel - were presented in the required number and corresponding levels, and we worried the whole time whether everyone who was called was actually present... God, How nervous were we? But he was calm itself. And that calmed us.

At the end of the award ceremony, he thanked everyone from the protocol. I noticed that he did it that way every time.

There were usually May 1st and

On October 7th every year there is a huge flood of medals. I don't mean that in a derogatory way, because I know that such public recognition of achievements was important and was in no way slighted by those honored. No matter whether it is the activist medal or the Karl Marx Order, the National Prize or that

"Banner of Labor" was about.

Was it just the hands that you found remarkable?

I was amazed that he could laugh heartily and contagiously. Not the artificial, strained laughter that some superiors use to feign cheerfulness. No, there were moments when

it burst out of him almost uncontrollably. And I found his relationship with his wife touching. Such an intimate relationship was (and is) comparatively unusual in these circles. Despite their age, the two treated each other warmly and openly.

They stood by their relationship, they were clearly a couple. I remember when Lotte told me how they met while ice skating in Moscow in the 1930s: decades later, her eyes still lit up, as if she were a young girl again and newly in love.

And she was a good cook.

As we all know, the way to your heart is through your stomach. Two or three weeks before his death I brought some documents to Dölln, where they had both lived for some time. It was lunchtime and Lotte had just cooked, so I had to eat a bowl of noodle soup. She made sure that Walter followed a strict diet. I found that quite remarkable: there wasn't an eye of grease floating on the soup, and yet it still tasted excellent.

That was really great cooking.

You were there on the trip to Egypt in 1965?

Yes. It was a tough ride until we left. On the one hand, that

Problem with the travel route, the NATO states refused the right to fly over, which is why, with Tito's approval, we drove two days across the Mediterranean with the "Friendship of Nations" from Dubrovnik to Alexandria. On the other hand, there is concern that Nasser might still give in to pressure from Bonn. The claim to exclusive representation and the catalog of penalties of the Hallstein doctrine still applied. But everything was good and it was clear that Nasser and Ulbricht got along very well. The chemistry was right straight away.

Our Foreign Minister Lothar Bolz had already said on the outward journey:

Walter, if the trip is a success, you'll have to throw a party on board on the return trip. Well, we had a party on board.

But about a third of the delegation was hanging over the railing; we had quite a rough sea. Lotte's face was also greenish-yellow.

What was your specific role during this state visit to the Nile?

I was responsible for the gifts. There were around seventy sea chests that we packed exactly according to plan in the casino room in Niederschönhausen Castle.

Why plan?

This was important for being able to find everything when you needed it. I

made lists, for example it said: B. on it: box 25, package 23 at the top left. The content and why it was needed, for example

"Visit to kindergarten, toys." The boxes were in

Presidential Palace in Cairo unloaded and stored in a room. Four guards lined up in front of the four doors. I was given a representative from the Egyptian protocol department. But he had an Arabic problem. Working with a woman and then on equal terms at this age? That just didn't work. He clearly made me feel his condescension. Until we picked up presents from storage for the first time. I always got them the day before

List of the next day's visiting stations and a breakdown of which gifts were needed. So I went in with the guard, accompanied by him, and asked him to open box No. 25 and take out package No. 23 at the top left. There were toys in there that we needed for

kindergarten. Then box 58, package 11, top right: camera with equipment for the operations director anyway. This precision and Prussian order impressed the protocol man so much that from then on he treated me very politely and respectfully. Walter Ulbricht was already over 70 at the time of the trip

hot and the schedule is tight. How did he get through that?

He was absolutely fit and even did his morning exercise on the ship. He cut a good figure in every respect.

Alone or did others have to join in?

He didn't force anyone to do it. Lotte also did her gymnastics.

By the way, what was your relationship with her?

I had been assigned to her to look after her, to help her with certain questions. She had a small study in the State Council in which she worked. She gave me a cash register with cash and the checkbook

the Ulbrichts to manage their personal expenses. They were over-correct in this respect and didn't allow anything to be given as a gift; every receipt and every invoice was filed.

At the beginning I didn't get along with Lotte Ulbricht; at times she seemed a bit bossy. When she once dressed me down for no reason, I went to Max Opitz and asked him to give me another task. No, he said, if you have problems with Lotte, you have to sort it out with her, not with me. The next time I was in Lotte's room, she already knew. Man, girl, you know that I have gallbladder, and when it comes to me

If things don't go so well, I let others feel that too. Sorry. You can't leave me alone. – From then on we got along well.

She was also somewhat idiosyncratic and unwieldy when it came to fashion. Gerald Götting's wife told me that she had paid Lotte a compliment at some reception. She wore a black velvet dress with fur trim, which Sabine Götting found very charming and told her so. "Me and charming," Lotte snapped, "they hardly go together."

I also accompanied her on visits to trade fairs in Leipzig. When trouser suits came along, you would have

You should experience it, Egon. She almost couldn't control herself anymore. Women should look like women and not like guys, she complained. Dresses, skirts and costumes are appropriate clothing. And? Later she liked to wear pants suits herself.

Was she picky?

You can not say it like that. She was just particularly critical. When I had wedding rings made on Walter's behalf, very simple and plain ones, she said: I don't know... Walter liked them straight away.

How big was the Protocol Department of the State Council?

Four people and a secretary. And we really had our hands full. Just take the awards events. Hundreds of documents had to be drawn up and sealed each time; We were still working with varnish back then. Awards, receptions, congratulations on birthdays, letters of condolence, looking after guests...

We felt how the workers and farmers in the State Council Building enjoyed it when they came to an award ceremony. There was no pomp and ostentation, a simple elegance. I cried when we left

After the opening of the house in 1964, to which hundreds were invited, we then viewed the parquet floor: completely scratched by the high heels. We had to have the entire parquet replaced immediately. We were brought up to be very frugal; every expense was treated as if it were personal.

Have you ever had to form a guard? I'm asking because a friend of mine who works in the Federal President's office...

A comrade of ours was also taken on.

No, the one I'm talking about started new and under Köhler. She was complete

indignant when she realized that the entire team regularly had to march as a backdrop when the Federal President received a foreign guest. And she had to organize a school class that stood by, and in this class a student was implanted who spoke the national language of the state guest, who was of course happy when he was boldly greeted with a three cheese high. In very foreign languages it was sometimes a very difficult exercise to locate such a child. Did you also have to prepare such productions?

No, there was no such thing.

You already mentioned the trip to Egypt. Did you also accompany Walter Ulbricht on other state visits?

Yes, to Yugoslavia in 1966. And the year before, when Tito visited the GDR, I looked after Jovanka, his wife, at the so-called women's program in Berlin. At that time, Josip Broz Tito received the Great Star of Friendship of Nations from Walter Ulbricht for his outstanding services in the fight against fascism, as the justification was given.

Tito spoke German, both of them

Men didn't need an interpreter. Are you supposed to have been on first name terms too?

I don't know that. I focused on other things.

Were you also on the island, on Brioni, where Tito had his residence?

Yes, of course. We, Ulbricht and his entourage, were brought over on a state yacht. A long red carpet was rolled out at the harbor. At the end there was Tito in a blue navy uniform, next to him Jovanka in a white suit. She looked great, a really attractive woman. And then they came towards us on the red carpet. That is to say, Marshal Tito did not hold court like a monarch, which is

Given the circumstances, one might assume that he went up to the statesman Walter Ulbricht and greeted him warmly and on an equal footing. And with the brotherly kiss that is common in Slavic states.

What was your most difficult task in the State Council?

The preparation and execution of the funeral service. I still have the image in my mind today of Lotte almost collapsing at the coffin with Walter Ulbricht lying in state. On August 7, 1973, after the end of the World Festival and a week after his death, the public said goodbye at the official residence. The parade didn't end, and...

Tens of thousands lined the streets to Friedrichsfelde. A publication<sup>5</sup> published in 2011 stated that:

"a surprising number of people" had turned up. And the authors explained to themselves that obviously "Ulbricht left deeper traces in his long career as an official and head of state of the GDR, which he helped found, than the current leadership [...] expressed in their obituaries." For once they were right.

It was denied, particularly in the West, that Ulbricht had wanted the World Festival to continue, and they judged this

fact as a conscious, demonstrative affront to his successor. I also spoke to Lotte Ulbricht about it later. She definitely confirmed this to me: Walter had told her that if something happened to him, the festival should go on. So many young people came from far away and were preparing and looking forward to this meeting. You shouldn't just send them home.

Lotte handled such intimate communications very carefully and sparingly. It will have behaved that way.

Mathias Tullner in: The Death of the Dictator. Event and memory in the 20th century.

Edited by Thomas Grossbölting and Rüdiger Schmidt, Göttingen 2011

Bruno Mahlow

"We don't have to repeat the bad experiences"

Bruno Mahlow, born in 1937, was born in Moscow as the son of a communist émigré and has lived in Berlin since 1947. After graduating from high school and studying for six years at the Institute for International Relations in Moscow, he entered the diplomatic service of the GDR, including first secretary at the embassy in Beijing. Active in the apparatus of the SED Central Committee since 1967

1973 to 1989 deputy, then head of the International Relations Department. From 1990 he was an advisor to the International Commission of the PDS party executive, and today he is a member of the Council of Elders of the Left party.

Egon Bahr, once State Secretary in Willy Brandt's Federal Chancellery, said in a dialogue with Valentin Falin, ambassador to Bonn, Germanist, Central Committee Secretary in the 1970s, about German-Russian relations through the ages: It was fortunate for Germany, that there were two great politicians - Adenauer and Ulbricht.

Both would have known how their policies fit into those of the two great powers. Now, this is not about equating these two politicians who represent completely opposite interests.

Due to my background, I often interpreted at meetings with officials of the CPSU and the SED and repeatedly learned in conversations how highly valued Ulbricht was in the Soviet Union. Julij Kwizinskij<sup>6</sup> sometimes also interpreted for Ulbricht and judged him in his memoirs: »Walter Ulbricht was undoubtedly the strongest politician

among everyone who ruled the GDR. And he described Ulbricht's relationship with the Soviet Union as follows: "Moreover, for him, the iron-clad communist and non-member of the CPSU, the idea of serving the cause of communism ultimately focused indispensably on the idea of serving the Soviet Union."

So a loyal vassal of Moscow? Kvitinskij contradicts: "It would, however, be wrong and unfair to see in him a person who was only capable of repeating in a German way what Soviet theorists and practitioners of socialist construction had conceived

have. That was far from the case. Walter Ulbricht was a personality. Even his fiercest opponents and adversaries recognized this. With regard to the models of organizing a socialist state, he already saw many things in these years that we enthusiastically discovered in the 1980s.«<sup>7</sup>

Leonid Brezhnev also treated Ulbricht with respect and loyalty; he valued him as a sincere friend of the Soviet Union. And this even when Walter Ulbricht called for Khrushchev to be replaced by Brezhnev, as was also the case in a corresponding statement by the Politburo of the SED Central Committee

Expression came, in fact regretted. It is true that Brezhnev, as stated in some publications, was critical of Ulbricht's sometimes very demanding, even schoolmaster-like appearance with theoretical demands. Ulbricht, as Soviet partners testified, could pound his fist on the table. It is also true that replacing Ulbricht would not have been easy without the consent of Moscow and Brezhnev. But it is

also true that Erich Honecker was not the only candidate. In 1970/71 there were active discussions between various Soviet partners in the GDR in order to...

determine who would be Ulbricht's most suitable successor. Some names from leadership members to first district secretaries played a role.

Despite Brezhnev's agreement to relieve Ulbricht of his position as First Secretary, he visited him on the sidelines of the Eighth Party Congress, in which Ulbricht no longer took part.

Meanwhile, a working group at the party conference was busy replacing the name Walter Ulbricht with Erich Honecker in all speeches by foreign guests.

Before the party conference, a long-time chief adviser in the Central Committee visited me in my apartment in Berlin

CPSU and one of Brezhnev's speechwriters. Alexander Bowin informed me that Brezhnev requested that Honecker treat Walter Ulbricht properly. Pyotr A. Abrassimov was even clearer, who, as he told me personally, had said to Honecker: "Erich, you... (I refrain from using the Russian swear word out of piety - BM), what are you doing with Ulbricht?"

Walter Ulbricht was a reliable and sincere friend of the Soviet Union, but at the same time an honest one who paid attention to the conditions and interests of the GDR and therefore sometimes an uncomfortable one

Moscow's comrades-in-arms.

Moscow repeatedly urged that the proportion of private property in the means of production in the GDR be decisively reduced and that full nationalization be implemented as soon as possible. Ulbricht believed that the private entrepreneur, especially in the service sector, was extremely important for the normal functioning of the socialist economy. We should also try this out in the Soviet Union and see what positive effect it will have.

Another example was the way in which agriculture was cooperativeed in the GDR, which was due to

its fast pace was initially greeted with enthusiasm in Moscow. But then people became increasingly uneasy because it was nothing like collectivization in the Soviet Union. Ulbricht had an open conversation about this with Frol Koslow<sup>8</sup> in which he explained that he was not thinking of acting on the Soviet model because he had experienced collectivization in the 1930s and the associated decline in production. Therefore, he could not allow this experience to be repeated under the conditions of the GDR, or was the USSR prepared to send its food supplies to the GDR

increase? If not, as he assumes, the Soviet comrades should leave him alone on this matter. In the collective farms, productivity is many times lower and the order is much worse than in the agricultural production cooperatives.

Walter Ulbricht was always a learner; at first it was not easy for him to understand economic policy. My sister Hedwig Mahlow, who worked for Bruno Leuschner<sup>9</sup> for many years, reported that those involved in economic and foreign trade issues such as Heinrich Rau and Bruno Leuschner

Ulbricht's decisions sometimes suffered. Ulbricht wanted to develop the GDR as a showcase for socialism (my Soviet partners spoke of "socialist Switzerland"), but needed the support of the Soviet Union and other allies to do so. But they didn't want it the way Ulbricht wanted it. Only gradually did he realize that the GDR would only remain the second winner in this competition with the FRG. The formation of a strategic working group, the development of the new economic system, speak for Ulbricht's strategic thinking

Combining the requirements of the scientific and technological revolution with the achievements of socialism. Walter Ulbricht did not follow Khrushchev's illusion, declaring in 1961 that "our generation will live under communism." He countered this with the thesis of the relatively independent social formation of socialism.

He went even further by asking a Soviet interlocutor from the leadership whether the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee might not have to start thinking about whether it wanted to run the state as before. You shouldn't act as if the party is the one

could dictate the laws of society's development. He asked the question whether the party should not exclusively concern itself with what was its own issue. There is a need for a radical reform of the party, a review of the entire methodology of its work, a different type of cadres, a change in its role in the state apparatus and in production. Competent specialists are required.

Otherwise the party apparatus will become a caste and lead itself into a dead end.<sup>10</sup>

Ulbricht was also far-sighted on the national question. He considered it inadmissible for the SED to attack the

renounced the question of reunification and left it to the West.

Julij Kwizinskij (1936-2010), started in the diplomatic service as chief interpreter in 1959, was cultural attaché in Berlin in the 1960s, was involved in the negotiations for the Quadrilateral Agreement on Berlin in 1879/71, envoy in Bonn from 1978, and was a member in the 1980s He was part of the Soviet delegation at the disarmament talks with the USA in Geneva. From 1986 to 1991 Ambassador in Bonn, then First Deputy to the Soviet Foreign Minister. From 1997 to 2003 Russian ambassador in Norway. Then deputy of the Duma for the CP.

see Julij Kwizinskij: Time and Fall. Records, in: Diplomatic Dossier, Moscow 1999, p. 210ff.

Frol Koslow (1908-1965), from 1952 to



1953 2nd Secretary and from 1953 to 1957 1st Secretary

Secretary of the Leningrad Regional Committee. In 1952, at the age of 44, he became a member of the Central Committee of the CPSU. 1957 member of the Politburo, 1960 Central Committee Secretary for cadre or organizational issues. He was considered a potential successor to Khrushchev, but suffered a stroke in 1963 from which he never recovered.

Bruno Leuschner (1910-1965) was in a concentration camp until 1945, and in 1945 he set up the economic department of the KPD, then the German Economic Commission. He had been a member of the Central Committee since 1950 and, succeeding Heinrich Rau, was chairman of the State Planning Commission from 1952 to 1961, then minister for the coordination of basic economic tasks in the Presidium of the Council of Ministers and, from June 1962, permanent representative of the GDR on the Executive Committee of the CMEA.

Julij Kwizinskij: Time and Fall ..., op. cit., p. 213f.

Outside view

Valentin Falin

Ulbricht knew that living on credit was expensive

Valentin M. Falin, born in 1926, born in Leningrad, the family moved to Moscow in 1930. During the Second World War he worked in the armaments factory

"Red Proletarian", 1945 to 1950 studied at the Moscow Institute for International Relations, majoring in German and international law. Use in the Soviet Union

Control Commission in Germany. He then spent over four decades in positions in the Soviet state and the CPSU, primarily in the foreign policy service. From 1971 to 1978 Ambassador of the USSR in Bonn, from 1986 to 1988 Director of the Novosti Press Agency, from 1988 to 1991 Head of the International Department of the Central Committee of the CPSU, most recently Secretary of the Central Committee.

Valentin Mikhailovich, you are probably the best expert on Soviet German policy among the living. From Stalin to Gorbachev you were there

Foreign Policy Service. You know many German politicians in East and West personally. What comes to mind when you think of Walter Ulbricht?

The sharpness and weight of the German question after May 9, 1945 determined our public's interest in those politicians who had to deal with the legacy of the Third Reich. This was an extremely difficult task in every respect. In this context, the name Walter Ulbricht became a household name.

At an event organized by the leadership of the SED in the Werner-Seelenbinder Hall in Berlin in August 1950, I was there together with others

Newly qualified employees of the Soviet Control Commission Walter Ulbricht as well as Otto Grotewohl, Willi Stoph and Erich Honecker were introduced. Factual contacts arose at the conference in Luckenwalde, which will be discussed later. Ulbricht's regular comments in the mass media and my conversations with Willi Stoph offered an indirect exchange with his ideas. It seemed to me that Walter Ulbricht was at the helm of the Republic, despite the talk that Stalin only knew one real German communist, Wilhelm Pieck.

What could have motivated the Soviet leader to think this way and also to assume that the unification of the KPD and SPD to form the Socialist Unity Party was hasty? In addition to overarching foreign policy challenges and threats of violence, I assume that Stalin's insight into the irreparable damage that the dogmatism of the 1920s and 1930s did to the Soviet Union itself, to the world communist movement, to the idea of socialism was noticeable. With the dissolution of the Comintern in 1943, Stalin set the course for the architecture of the future

World order.

At a meeting in March 1945 with the members of the commissions that developed proposals for Moscow's post-war course, he made it clear: the division of Germany contradicts the strategic interests of the USSR. The country does not need outposts with pro-Soviet regimes. His well-being consists in good neighbors, without stones in his back.

The facts speak for themselves. To the extent that this depended on Moscow, relations developed with Finland, Austria and Czechoslovakia. Until 1947, i.e.

H. Until Washington decided to form the Atlantic military bloc and revive the relics of German imperialism for its service, the governments of Romania and Hungary were led by bourgeois-liberal politicians. Unfortunately, to this day only a few people know about the operation by the US secret services under the code name

"Cleavage". Their victims included, among many others, Rudolf Slánský<sup>1</sup> in Czechoslovakia and Dimitroff's successors in Bulgaria. Władysław Gomułka<sup>2</sup> fell into disgrace in Poland. The USSR's relations became extremely complicated

Yugoslavia. There were also SED officials among the suspects.

Walter Ulbricht was certainly not a comfortable partner. He knew how to defend his point of view hard and protect the values of the republic. But I can say from my own experience and many conversations with him in private: Walter Ulbricht was open to serious arguments and knew how to keep his word. There is no reason to deny Ulbricht respect, neither then nor in retrospect. In my opinion he was a striking personality and a statesman of outstanding caliber.

Ulbricht came out at the end of April 1945

Soviet exile to Berlin with the call to found the KPD3, which was confirmed by Stalin. A crucial directive was: It is wrong to impose the Soviet system on Germany. The goal is a unified, anti-fascist, democratic German republic with all democratic rights and freedoms for the people. Ulbricht promoted this idea and encouraged Anton Ackermann to write a brochure about the special German path to socialism. Only a few years later, the German comrades were ordered by Moscow to abandon this path. Why?

Tracing the evolution of parties and states does not win if time and space are consciously or unconsciously cut up and realities are selectively sorted. On behalf of Churchill, British chiefs of staff prepared Operation "Unthinkable" in March-May 1945. World War III was scheduled to begin on July 1, 1945, with the aim of subjugating the Soviet Union to the will of the United States and Great Britain.

Washington did not get involved in this insane undertaking: the USA was held back by the fact that it had to support the Red Army

needed to force Japan to surrender. But two weeks after Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the "Star-Spangled Banner Democrats" began testing variants for a preemptive nuclear strike against the Soviet Union.

At some point I put the phrase "the splitting of the atom split Germany apart" into circulation. In this way, Europe was tailored, the globe was tailored according to meridians and parallels. At the end of 1946, the Truman administration made up its mind: whatever policy Moscow pursued, the very existence of the USSR was essential to American security

incompatible. During this time, Washington revived the basic plan given to the US delegation at the 1919 Paris Conference. He envisaged expanding the Kremlin's sphere of influence over the »Central Russian Plate« to be limited.

In order not to, as the Russians say, descend into meaningless chatter, I ask the question: How should Stalin react in view of the copies of cited and similar decisions of the United States lying on his desk? He tried to get ahead of things, concretizing and developing the Soviet proposals that had already been made in Potsdam and...

were submitted immediately after the conference. What is meant above all is the initiative in favor of holding all-German elections on the basis of uniform electoral procedures, the formation of a national government in accordance with the voting results and the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany, after which all occupying troops should be withdrawn from Germany in one to two years. Stalin consistently emphasized that the German people had the right to determine their own socio-economic order. He admitted

understand that Moscow would not object if the majority were in favor of an order in the style of the Weimar Republic. In this position of Moscow one can of course see a drift away from the orientation towards a "special German path to socialism". If one wishes, it is not difficult to identify state policy with the lodestar of ideology by putting the given in brackets. Politics was and remains the art of setting priorities.

From 1946 to 1949 and later, the task of all tasks remained: How can you

to neutralize and avert the aggressive intentions of those in power in the USA who presume to fully capitalize on the nuclear monopoly? Compare that

»Generalplan Ost«5 with the »Dropshot Plan« or with the programs for

"Decapitation of the Soviet Union," which Truman laid down in November 1949 as the basis for the foreign and military policy of the USA and NATO.

As a pragmatist, Stalin did not deceive himself. If free elections had been held, the majority of Germans would not have agreed to a "socialist path". However, he expected it

and had reasons for the supporters of the country's national unity, opponents of the revenge-seeking "Aryans" who want to join the Pentagon's foreign legion, to gain the upper hand.

In 1949 the Soviet Union tested its nuclear weapon. The work of the design offices to produce effective carriers of nuclear charges also took more and more shape. The USA postponed "X" day from 1952 to 1955. Washington used the time to achieve tenfold superiority over the USSR in conventional weapons.

The Creed of the Cold War made

changes through. The emphasis in everyday matters also shifted.

The GDR has always emphasized the guilt of fascist Germany in the criminal war against the USSR and honored the sacrifices of the Soviet country for the freedom of Germany and Europe from Hitler's fascism.

Nevertheless: Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht tried to have German prisoners of war released from Soviet captivity for humanitarian reasons. They also took into account that the...

The prisoner of war issue was used for anti-Soviet propaganda. Ulbricht and his comrades were reprimanded by Stalin for allegedly supporting war criminals. Today, certain political circles in Germany act as if it was the achievement of Konrad Adenauer and not the common will of the USSR and the GDR that the prisoners of war came home. For the USSR and the GDR, these people deny a humanistic attitude from the outset. What can you say about that?

The question is not worded correctly.

At the time the GDR was founded, two or three groups of German prisoners of war were serving their sentences in the Soviet Union: members of the Wehrmacht, the personnel of the SS formations, and those responsible for the Third Reich's secret services. The majority of them were involved in the aggressor's atrocities on Soviet territory, in atrocities in which thousands of towns were razed to the ground.

In Belarus alone, the occupiers burned 9,200 towns and villages, including 5,295 with their inhabitants. 2,230,000 people became victims of the genocide, each

third resident of Belarus perished. The areas of Pskov, Bryansk and Leningrad presented a similar picture. The tragic fate of the Czech Lidice is well known. I don't remember anyone in Germany questioning out loud the legitimacy of punishing Nazi murderers. Should the criminals who committed atrocities on occupied Soviet territory get away with a mild scare?

The Soviet Union did not call for revenge, nor for the translation of the Nazi orders from German into Russian, in which the victors over the

elementary norms of law and morality. Read Stalin's order of January 19, 1945

"On the behavior (of soldiers and officers) on the territory of Germany." Yes, it's true, contrary to this order, setting the course was associated with major derailments.

But after going through Nazi-style hell, even angels' wings would fall off.

The "Democrats" were happy to take in the murderers who fell into their net and covered the escape of thousands of criminals from retaliation. And this in violation of solemn promises made to...

to pursue those guilty of Nazi crimes to the ends of the earth. I repeat myself. The Soviet Union expressed its willingness to show leniency towards those who often found themselves included in the criminal orgy against their own will. At least four out of five Germans who were unable to escape Soviet captivity were released home in the fall of 1949. Many of those who came from the eastern zone have had their sentences reduced.

The appeal of Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht prompted Stalin to contact the Bonn leadership through the Red Cross

To signal the USSR's willingness to release a large number of prisoners from West Germany and hand them over to the Federal Republic of Germany authorities. Konrad Adenauer banned the West German Red Cross from entering into any negotiations with Soviet partners. This is not a humanitarian question, but a political one; The longer they remain in captivity, the cheaper it is for us, explained Chancellor Adenauer. According to reliable information, the corresponding document was located in the Koblenz archive. 1950, the GDR had only been in existence for a few months

old, began her work in the Soviet Control Commission. What ideas and orders did you come to Berlin with for your first assignment? A brief digression. How did it come about that when I entered the institute I chose German instead of English or French? The war had probably completely erased my childhood and youthful ideas about the exemplary decency of the nation of Goethe and Schiller, Bach and Beethoven. There was an abyss between the external and the internal, between appearance and reality. I had to have one

Find an explanation for the tragedy that had mercilessly passed over my family.

Many war booty copies of books on German philosophy, politics, culture, social studies and economics ended up in the institute library. After reading the works of critics and apologists of the German

When I took in "exclusivity," I couldn't say that I was committed to unraveling the tormenting question of what

"Why?" would have approached. The hope remained that there would be light at the end of the tunnel when I was there with the specifics of the Germans

realities come into contact. The German Democratic Republic welcomed me with wonderful weather and the ruins of Frankfurt on the Oder.

Berlin at that time also did not give the impression of being a showcase of well-being.

In the Soviet Control Commission (SKK), I was tasked with concentrating on the relationship between the two German states and following the internal processes in the Federal Republic of Germany, including the development of mutual relationships in the Bonn government coalition and the situation in the SPD and KPD. The

Political advisor VS Semyonov and his deputy Il Ilyichov considered my participation in the preparation of reports on the work of the SKK and in considerations of possible reactions of the Center to actions of the three Western powers useful. I'll leave out details at this point. I would just like to note that at the end of 1950 I and a colleague from the SKK had a meeting with Gustav Heinemann<sup>7</sup>, who demonstratively broke with Adenauer as a sign of protest against the remilitarization of the Federal Republic of Germany. Official duties required me to travel all over the country

traveled. Leipzig, Magdeburg, Erfurt, Chemnitz, Eisenach. I was overcome by an uncanny melancholy when I visited Halberstadt and of course Dresden. Only incorrigibly hard-hearted people were able to remain indifferent after immersing themselves in what they saw at the time. I came to the capital of Saxony on the 13th.

February 1951. On many streets you could only walk. On the left and right there are undamaged ruins of houses under which children, women and the elderly are buried. What were they guilty of and to whom? I go to the nearest cemetery. Until now the gravestones are in front of my eyes:

Mother, grandmother or grandfather and the names of the children, the youngest of whom are often not even a year old. This has nothing to do with sentimentality, which I was accused of then and later.

Even on the ocean of evil there must be a shore somewhere, but how can one reach it without making concerted efforts in the same direction?

In 1964 I had a long conversation with Walter Ulbricht about Dresden. To this day, the dispute over how many people died under the bombings of the city has not subsided. Is that right?

Claim, I asked the interlocutor, that their number exceeds the number of victims after the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima. According to Ulbricht's statements, the GDR authorities studied all accessible documents in three attempts and came to the conclusion that 38,000 people were killed or burned alive.<sup>8</sup>

Why was Dresden given such a fate? According to one of the unfalsified versions, before departure, the British pilots were instructed to show the Russians what the Allied strategic air force was capable of. According to other information, the American ones met

Crews who flew their attacks during the day were ordered to destroy the bridges over the Elbe in order to stop the advance of the Red Army troops westward.

I gather from your autobiography<sup>9</sup> that in the early fall of 1950 you took part in an event in Luckenwalde where Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht discussed the danger of the apparent remilitarization of West Germany with representatives from East and West. Your boss, W.

S. Semyonov, prompted you to report on an allegedly unwanted remark made by Wilhelm Pieck in a telegram to Stalin. Were the

President of the GDR and his comrades Ulbricht and Grotewohl reliable allies for the head of the Soviet Control Commission or people to be watched critically?

About the episode in Luckenwalde. In my opinion, the speculations that cast shadows on Moscow's mutual relations with Pieck, Ulbricht and Grotewohl are unfounded. Stalin followed everything that was happening in the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany with intense attention, as well as the contacts between these states. The hope was for the restoration of a sovereign Germany

not removed from the agenda. Under the condition of jewelry work at the base, without distortions to the left and right, the goal could, according to his considered considerations, be achieved in five to seven years. Calls to overthrow the Adenauer regime did not fit into such a scenario.<sup>10</sup> The general situation in the world required caution. The Soviet leadership was aware of the machinations of MacArthur<sup>11</sup>, other Washington hawks, who wanted to transition the Korean conflict into a nuclear weapons phase, and in this way a confluence of the Far Eastern conflict

Theater of war was provoked with the European one.

By the way, Korea didn't get caught up in the fire at Moscow's behest. Kim Il Sung couldn't get along with Li Sing-Man<sup>12</sup>.

It was part of the GDR's raison d'être to view reparations as a contribution to making amends for the damage inflicted on the USSR during the war. After the Western powers refused to withdraw reparations from the western zones in 1949, contrary to the provisions of the USSR's Potsdam Agreement, the entire burden now fell on the shoulders of the SBZ and later the GDR. This put a strain on the GDR economy. At the

There were also detailed conflicts regarding the realization of the reparations payments. Walter Ulbricht was often at odds with representatives of the Soviet Control Commission. Have you experienced Ulbricht in such situations and what thoughts and feelings did you have?

A few clarifications are certainly not detrimental. At the turn of 1945/46, the Truman administration made it clear: The Cold War is just a war, just one waged with different means. His arsenal includes the economic and technological blockade of the

Soviet Union, the accumulation of difficulties that hinder the healing of our economic wounds.

Instead of the 25% of industrial equipment that was not necessary for an economy in peacetime, which was due to the USSR under the Potsdam Agreements, we received reparations totaling 12.5 million dollars.<sup>13</sup> For comparison: the USA and England took into their treasury alone over 20 billion dollars through the confiscation of German property abroad.  
The loads at the partial

Compensation for the losses of our economic potential lay in the Soviet occupation zone. In 1946, Stalin accepted Marshal V.D. Sokolovsky's proposal to stop dismantling the equipment used in industrial facilities to convert "joint enterprises" whose production largely went to the Soviet Union as reparations. In practice, the determination of the nomenclature of products, the volume and deadlines for the fulfillment of orders and, above all, the prices were not without disputes. Our economic officials often exaggerated and there were detailed clarifications,

including at the level of Ulbricht and WI Chuikov<sup>14</sup>. It took years before I managed to push through the fundamental decision that the calculations, including for uranium mined in Thuringia, were based on world prices.

After the Western powers rejected the Soviet note on Germany policy of March 10, 1952 (Stalin note), Stalin summoned Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht to a consultation in Moscow in April 1952. Among other things, it was about the Soviet proposal to expand the border between the GDR and the FRG militarily and to establish their own nationals

To create armed forces of the GDR. On the day the German comrades left Moscow, the second Stalin note was presented to the Western powers. From your memories I now learn that both notes were created behind the back of the GDR and were handed over to the Western powers without the GDR knowing about it. What were the motives for the distrust of one's own ally?  
About the well-known Soviet notes of March 10, 1952 (draft of the peace treaty with Germany) and of April 9 of the same year with the proposal to hold free

All-German elections: Moscow resumed its project of peaceful settlement, which was discussed in several rounds with the leadership of the SED. The text of the March Note was not made available to the friends in advance, but they were familiarized with it before Deputy Foreign Minister AA Gromyko invited the ambassadors of the three Western powers. As far as I heard, such an unusual procedure was due to the "Dertinger matter"<sup>15</sup>.

Any premature leak could spoil the effect of the action we were planning.

As for the April note, I venture

to claim that Pieck was privy to the essence of the matter in detail. In connection with a possible rejection of the Soviet initiatives by the West, the issue of securing the border between the GDR and the FRG and the creation of a National People's Army was discussed.

It is appropriate to categorically contradict those among the Soviet and Russian "authorities" who are trying to pass off the Soviet initiatives in the spring of 1952 as a political feint. The leader of the Italian Socialists Nenni asked Stalin directly how Moscow

would react if pro-Atlantic factions gained the upper hand after the all-German elections. The answer was: The verdict is accepted. Some historians claim that the decision of the 2nd SED party conference to gradually build the foundations of socialism in the GDR was Ulbricht's solo effort.

Apart from the fact that facts show that in a letter to Stalin dated July 2, 1952, Ulbricht had asked for the opinion of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU (B) and that on July 8, 1952, under the leadership of Stalin, this body also approved the decisions of the 2nd Party conference

approved, I ask myself: Would it have been at all conceivable that such a drastic development in the GDR would have been possible without the consent of the occupying power?

According to my understanding, the decision of the 2nd party conference of the SED and Moscow's reaction to it can be interpreted as follows: Stalin warned the Western powers as well as Bonn that the consequences of the Federal Republic of Germany's inclusion in NATO would not be long in coming. The administrative-state division of the country is complemented by the social division of the nation. I don't see any sign of one

If Stalin abandoned his idea, Germany would, after gaining sovereignty, prefer good neighbors with the Soviet Union and, together with us, lay one of the cornerstones for a better peace order in Europe.

Just three months after Stalin's death and two weeks before June 17, 1953

On June 3rd and 4th, 1953, a meeting of the Politburo of the CPSU Central Committee with Ulbricht, Grotewohl and Oelßner took place in Moscow. Participants from the CPSU included: Malenkov, Beria, Molotov, Khrushchev, Bulganin, Kaganovich and Mikoyan. Present

Also included was your boss Semyonov and the Supreme Commander of the Soviet Armed Forces in Germany, Grechko. The GDR was accused of having a "faulty political line" across the board. The same politicians who had approved of the GDR's political line a year earlier were now distancing themselves from it. Was this the work of Beria, whom Khrushchev later described as a "provocateur in the German question," or were there other reasons?

The power struggle unfolded subliminally in Moscow even before Stalin's death. With his departure to another world, this fight began

open forms. The new rulers showed their trump cards: they promised to humanize the situation of the village, to allow other social classes to enjoy the fruits of peace, and to give freedom to hundreds of thousands of prisoners, mainly criminal violators. The sphere of foreign policy ceased to be taboo. LP Beria tried to convince himself and others that the CDU could lose the 1953 federal elections and that the new coalition led by Social Democrats could bring about qualitative changes in Bonn's attitude towards the USSR

would. The Information Committee was also included in the discussion. The analytical paper, which was prepared with my participation on behalf of the Politburo, cast doubt on the Beria forecast. We concluded that the SPD's victory was unlikely and that even if it were successful, the Federal Republic would not be able to free itself from Washington's tutelage in the near future. Without consulting any of the members of the Areopagus<sup>16</sup>, Beria commissioned his "personal agent" to clarify what price Washington, London and

Paris was willing to pay Moscow if it accepted the Western model of unifying Germany. Beria didn't believe in them "Viability" of the GDR. His cynical idea was that it would be better to give up the GDR for an "appropriate reward" than to simply lose it.

The pressure for reparations and the involvement in the devastating arms race had an enormous impact on the standard of living of the GDR population. Any further tightening of the screws threatened to result in an outburst of open discontent. Not without

The encouraging work of the Western media politicized the inconsistencies and problems of everyday life. A crisis was brewing. Our participation was marked on the eve of the 17th.

In June 1953, a package of measures was drawn up with which the mutual relations between the USSR and the GDR were cleared of the aftertaste of occupation. The chapter on reparations was closed. The Republic was now able to dispose of the companies that were previously part of common property. Among other things, they also had in mind to remove Walter Ulbricht from his solo roles, if not into them at all

to accompany second or third row. But in the rush, they failed to immediately reverse the decision to cut wages for construction workers. And it's no coincidence that people think that a lost minute cannot be made up for in many years. Or to put it another way: There is no greater wisdom than timeliness, as Francis Bacon<sup>17</sup> said.

Beria paid dearly for his attempt to betray "the friend and ally of the USSR, the socialist German Democratic Republic." Khrushchev did not fail to settle scores with his main rival in the power struggle. However, to date there are not

The dots on the i's are set: Did the first people in the GDR themselves draw adequate conclusions from the events of June 1953? The Soviet leadership at the time made a fatal miscalculation - they gave up the banner of German national unity. From then on this field was usurped by the "Democrats". Another grimace of politics.

Between 1958 and 1961, the USSR increased its efforts to conclude a peace treaty with Germany. In May 1961, Khrushchev told Kennedy that if this were not possible,

The USSR would conclude a peace treaty only with the GDR. After

On August 13, 1961, Ulbricht wrote to Khrushchev urging the conclusion of such a contract and making suggestions. On September 28, 1961, the Soviet premier replied that any steps that could aggravate the situation should be avoided. What had happened to cause the USSR to gradually abandon its own long-term plan to conclude a peace treaty?

The situation in the years between 1958 and 1961 is characterized by a number of

events of primary importance. Nazi Khrushchev set out to rid West Berlin of its function as "the cheapest atomic bomb in the body of the GDR". His rhetoric was supported by reference to the regulations in 1945/47, including a report from the Control Council, which stated in black and white: "Greater Berlin is the area that is jointly occupied by four powers... and is at the same time the capital the Soviet occupation zone.« The defacto division of Germany began with the division of Greater Berlin.

The hint – the traditional one

American "expanded interpretation" of international agreements would not be without consequences - could have made an impression. A unilateral revision of the Control Council's determinations regarding Greater Berlin called into question the status of the air corridors. But this did not come from the USSR Foreign Ministry, and Khrushchev was not interested in the history. Instead, he began to threaten - either transform West Berlin into a free city or conclude a peace treaty between the Soviet Union and the GDR, according to which all powers to organize foreign relations

West Berlin would pass to the Republic.

A new stage began in the confrontation over Berlin. In 1959 negotiations between the foreign ministers of the four powers took place. For the first time, the GDR was represented by Lothar Bolz and the FRG by Heinrich von Brentano. The main result of the tense exchange of views was that the door was not slammed. A bad argument is better than a good fight. Soon

Khrushchev "discovered" America and entered into not entirely contentless conversations with US President Dwight Eisenhower. And how it is

Hell will it, Powers<sup>18</sup> flew into the Sverdlovsk area without an invitation and was shot down! The removal of obstacles was postponed until the time of John Kennedy.

The Vienna summit took place in May 1961. Again it was not possible to move away from the dead center. The passions became more and more heated.

Khrushchev's threat that if we didn't come to an agreement we would seal off the border provoked a mass exodus from the republic. Walter Ulbricht insisted to the Soviet ambassador MG

Pervukhin aims to provide clarity: Better a terrible end than endless horror, as Friedrich Schiller put it.

After the Vienna summit, in which I took part as an expert, my working day looked something like this: from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. - routine work in the Foreign Ministry, from 6 p.m. to midnight - in Khrushchev's office. This lasted without any notable breaks until mid-1963, when I left this constellation for health reasons. I did not miss the not entirely diplomatic revival in the corridors of Kremlin power that existed before August 13, 1961

Erecting obstacles and then the wall that cut Berlin apart. In October 1961 I was introduced to the team that had to break down the extremely dangerous confrontation at Checkpoint Charlie in Berlin. The USA and the USSR were literally separated by 80-100 meters from the abyss into which both those who were right and those who were not could fall.

Every simplification is a distortion of the truth. History as an exact science is characterized by figures of concealment, confusion of cause and effect, and the publication of farces

Facts completely detrimental. For the misfortune that plagued the fate of two or three generations after 1945, the Germans are indebted to those who divided their country, who turned West Germany into a staging ground against the Soviet Union and its allies in order to assert Washington's claim to world domination. Just as there is a lot of noise about the imposition of "democracy" and "Freedom" the American way in the 1960s and 1970s sought to transport Indochina to the Stone Age.

The flight of GDR residents westward certainly did damage

Prestige of the Republic. And not just for prestige. The open border cost the GDR economy 38 to 40 billion marks annually.

"Patience is the art of having hope," said Vauvenargues<sup>19</sup>. But patience is also exhaustive.

I will not refer to precedents from world practice for justification, which knows of walls higher and longer than those of Berlin. What drove the Soviet side to take radical measures was, above all, acute threats to our national security. The "nuclear belt" through Berlin as a counterpart to

A nuclear charge belt that the Americans built from Schleswig-Holstein to Bavaria was unthinkable. So there remained a replacement.

Have the Warsaw Treaty countries exceeded the threshold of necessary defense in carrying out their response measures? The answer was given by the head of the CIA headquarters in West Berlin, who acknowledged in the mid-1990s: The construction of the wall disrupted NATO plans on the European war theater stage for years to come. "Abstinence is the guardian of life," warned the ancient sages. The events of

August/September 1961 demonstrated to Washington Moscow's willingness to defend its vital interests. At the same time, the Soviet Union did not reject the search for settlements based on a consensus among the four powers that was also acceptable to both German states. At the end of November it looked like a ray of hope. In John Kennedy's message to NS Khrushchev, the President spoke out in favor of balancing the interests of both great powers, combining previous Allied regulations with the development of new practices. The Soviet leader accepted the suggestions of the

White House leaders with the reservation of the need to orientate themselves on the imperatives of peaceful coexistence and not only on the principle of equality, but also on the basis of equal principles. I was tasked with preparing Khrushchev's response messages, and I can vouch that a model of mutual understanding emerged, at least on paper.

This did not correspond in every way with Konrad Adenauer's position. This was what drew Kennedy's attention. "To obtain Bonn's approval," he replied

President, "it's not your concern." The intensity of the exchange of messages decreased noticeably in the fall of 1962.

I remind you that the dialogue between Kennedy and Khrushchev began in November 1961. The President's order for the operation falls on the same November

"Mongoose", the devastating blow against Cuba. This happened in apparent violation of the assurances expressed to Khrushchev in Vienna: the landing at the Bay of Pigs<sup>20</sup> was a mistake and the USA would leave Fidel Castro alone.

"Mongoose" was accompanied by the transfer of the "Jupiter missiles" - the first-strike missiles aimed at the command centers of the USSR in order to "decapitate" them - to the territory of Turkey and Italy. Once again we were taught that the word of US leaders and

the treaty obligations they assumed cannot be relied upon. Washington obviously has neither before nor today the determination from the Eisenhower era that negotiations are a "weapon in political war" ("political warfare weapon", memorandum of the National Security Council).

placed in the archive.

After his return from Moscow from the summit of the Warsaw Treaty states, which had decided on the measures of August 13, 1961, Ulbricht said in the Politburo that the expansion of the GDR state border with West Berlin was necessary, but would unfortunately also lead to the policy of a confederation between the two German states would become obsolete. When you met with me on behalf of MS Gorbachev on November 24, 1989 for what was then a secret consultation in the rooms of the Soviet Embassy in Berlin<sup>21</sup>, you brought the

The idea of confederation is being discussed again. What were your motivations?

The Federal Republic of Germany's Finance Minister F. Schäffer<sup>22</sup> raised the idea of the German confederation to the political level. He traveled secretly to East Berlin and expected to meet Walter Ulbricht in person about the readiness of the anti-Adenauer Fronde to switch Bonn from NATO to a national wave. According to reliable information, Schäffer's intention was shared by R. Maier<sup>23</sup> and other Free Democrats, and Franz Josef Strauss also sympathized with it.

The beginning didn't inspire

enthusiasm. Schäffer was not allowed to meet Walter Ulbricht; he was suggested to meet with Markus Wolf and one of Markus's colleagues from the Soviet secret services. Washington and Moscow, which, of course, pursued different goals, failed to bring the two antipodes Adenauer and Ulbricht together at the same table.

Dulles<sup>24</sup> tried to convince the Chancellor that over time the larger will subordinate the smaller. In our understanding, the aim was to develop the success of "cutting" the Austrian impasse, to show the Europeans

that there is an alternative to "balancing on the edge of the abyss." Back then, the Germans probably spurned the best of all real opportunities to live as they see fit. The SPD's "Germany plan" didn't work either. The benevolent intentions of Otto John<sup>25</sup> and Axel Springer failed because of our own limitations.

Are you interested in what prompted me to recall the idea of confederation at our meeting on November 24, 1989? The "4+2" dispute that unfolded objectively opened up the possibility of a gradual rapprochement between the two

German states as a basis. Even Teltschik did not shy away from such a moving sequence. London and Paris "recommended" MS Gorbachev persistently contradicted the mechanical connection of the larger with the smaller. It was they who revived the concept of the confederacy, albeit in a limited reaction. Margret Thatcher and Francois Mitterrand did not rule out maintaining the FRG's membership in NATO and the GDR's membership in the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Washington did not appear particularly concerned about the division of Germany. It was enough for him

completely this or that form of separating the GDR from the Soviet defense system. So – you had a choice. To date, MS Gorbachev has not audibly revealed his reasons for giving up his own country's great power interests for a pinch of tobacco.

In your memoirs you describe a meeting with Walter Ulbricht in which you informed him about the activities of the USSR with its partners from the USA and the Federal Republic of Germany. You make the sarcastic remark: "It is not the custom to discuss with allies at the highest level. For such an unpleasant mission

"They are emissaries." Did you know that back then?

At this point, LI Brezhnev had long since discussed all the issues relating to the Berlin negotiations that affected the GDR in direct telephone contact with Erich Honecker<sup>26</sup>? He even specified the minimum exchange rate from DM into GDR marks for visitors from the West.

Our "magic" with Bahr and Rush took place in a top secret regime. Until the negotiation process was transferred to a four-page format, London, Paris and East Berlin were not allowed to know anything about it. When, what and how ambassadors

I don't know what PA Abrassimov discussed with Erich Honecker. I don't know whether Abrassimov took advantage of my telegram exchange with Moscow (until I was transferred to Bonn it was via the channel of the USSR embassy in the GDR). If he did so, he grossly violated the strictest prohibition.

Your colleague Julij Alexandrowitsch Kwizinskiy, one of your successors as ambassador of the USSR in Bonn, noted in his book "Before the Storm" that his country's relationship with the GDR was in certain respects was "schizophrenic". How do you see this looking back?

JA Kwizinskiy had sufficient skills. His intellectual prerequisites inspired me to suggest to AA Gromyko that Kwizinski be promoted from First Secretary of the Soviet Embassy in Berlin to the position of Deputy Head of the Third European Department of the Ministry, bypassing all career formalities. I admit that Julij Kwizinsky later had occasion to recall a remark by Konstantin Stanislavsky: the more talented a painter is, the more dangerous his mistakes are. You never stop learning.

You are an excellent expert on German history. What do you say?



the opinion of the well-known bourgeois journalist Sebastian Haffner, who in 1966 described Ulbricht as the most successful German politician after Bismarck and alongside Adenauer? He said that after Adenauer's departure, Ulbricht had no opponent in Germany who could hold a candle to him. If you look back and see Walter Ulbricht in the contradictory history of...

Classify the 20th century, what would you like to highlight?

Every historical period is unique in its own way. Yesterday's everyday life is difficult to connect with today's, and even less so with this

harmonize future ones. Knowledge is the armor against adversity. "He who sows untruth will reap disaster," says King Solomon in the Bible. The untruths about days gone by lay mines for access to the truth today and force false reflections on the challenges of tomorrow. I never tired of repeating to Gorbachev the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth about himself and about others. Only it helps society to regain its second breath. I referred to WI Lenin - "The truth must not depend on who it is

serves." Oh dear! I wasn't heard. The truth doesn't depend on that

Duration. Can one not imagine the true picture of post-war Europe, and not only Europe, if one removes the German Democratic Republic from it? Can one separate the social dismantling that is shaking the European Union and the abandonment of the historical stage by the USSR and not least by the GDR? Nobody will be able to prove that

"Social innovations" have undermined the immunity of our states. No, we fell victim to the crusade called the Cold War -

This, as the American neoconservatives openly declare, is the final chapter of the Second World War. And we ourselves are to blame because we turned out to be careless students of history.

The emergence of the German Democratic Republic is closely linked to the personality of Walter Ulbricht. There is no point in elevating him to heaven as the godfather of the Republic. But something else is undoubtedly true - his energy, determination, and creative spirit shaped the GDR's achievements in culture, science and business. Regarding the concern for the

The GDR had hardly any equal when it came to children, young people and older citizens. And the GDR schools, the healthcare system, and sports were models for imitation, forcing the same Federal Republic to "voluntarily" imitate what is frowned upon.

In my opinion, what should be preserved from Walter Ulbricht's legacy is, first and foremost, what forced his opponents and enemies to reckon with him - the ability to distinguish wheat from chaff and to recognize the downside of promises and appearances even in the darkness. Walter Ulbricht never forgot that a fur from

a stranger's shoulder can turn into a straitjacket, that borrowed life is an expensive pleasure. The benefactor will not refrain from charging usurious interest for his services.

Rudolf Slánský (1901-1952), 1921 Communist Party,

1929 Central Committee member, 1938 exile in Moscow, 1944 participant in the Slovak National Uprising, 1945 general secretary of the KCh. Arrested in 1951 as part of the Noel Field affair, sentenced to death in a show trial as the alleged "head of a subversive conspiracy center" and executed by hanging on December 3, 1952 along with ten other co-defendants. Legally rehabilitated in 1963 and politically in 1968.

Władysław Gomułka (1905-1982), locksmith,

1926 member of the Communist Party of Poland, general secretary of the Polish Workers' Party, founded underground in 1942 (from 1948 the Polish United Workers' Party). Replaced in 1948 because of alleged right-wing nationalist deviations, arrested in 1951 and expelled from the party. Released from prison in 1954, elected as chairman of the PVAP in the fall of 1956. Replaced as party leader at the end of 1970.

Call for the founding of the KPD on June 11, 1945

"Operation Unthinkable" was the name of a war plan commissioned by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill in May 1945, which aimed at the military subjugation of the Soviet Union by Great Britain and the USA. Two weeks after the victory of the anti-Hitler coalition over Nazi Germany, this plan was presented to him by the British

Premier had commissioned, handed over and amended twice. July 1, 1945 was set as the date for the attack on the Soviet Union. Due to the high numerical superiority of the Red Army, it was intended to rearm around 100,000 Wehrmacht soldiers. Because the plan was deemed militarily and politically unfeasible, it was dropped. The plan, classified as top secret, only became known to the public in 1998.

"General Plan Ost" (GPO) was the summary of all of Hitler's Germany's considerations and plans for the subjugation of Eastern Europe, including the Soviet Union.

"Operation Dropshot" was the code name for a US plan drawn up in 1949 that called for a nuclear and conventional preemptive strike on the Soviet Union.

The aim was to drop 300 atomic bombs and 29,000 high-explosive bombs on 200 targets in 100

Dropped into cities to destroy 85% of the Soviet Union's industrial capacity in a single blow. Between 75 and 100 of the 300 nuclear weapons were also to be used to destroy Soviet fighter aircraft on the ground.

This refers to the Moscow University of International Relations, where Falin studied from 1945 to 1949. He decided to major in German and German Studies as well as international law and graduated magna cum laude.

Gustav Heinemann (1899-1976), a doctor of law, was one of the co-founders of the CDU in 1945. The British appointed him mayor of Essen, which he was until 1949. In 1947/48 he was Minister of Justice in North Rhine-Westphalia; on September 20, 1949, Adenauer appointed him under pressure

Federal Minister of the Interior: He had been reprimanded by his own parliamentary group for having too many Catholics in the cabinet: Heinemann was a Protestant. On October 9, 1950, Heinemann resigned after it became public that the Chancellor had been conducting secret negotiations with the USA about the remilitarization of the Federal Republic of Germany behind the back of the federal government. In 1952 he left the CDU because of rearmament and joined the SPD in 1957. On the 1st In December 1966, at the suggestion of Willy Brandt, Heinemann was appointed Federal Minister of Justice in the grand coalition led by Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger. He was Federal President from 1969 to 1974.

The ignoble dispute over the number of victims in Dresden flared up again after the end of the GDR. The GDR had identified around 35,000 deaths. A Dresden historians' commission declared in 2008: »Im

As a result of the commission's investigations, 18,000 Dresden air war deaths have been identified so far, which can be attributed to the air raids between February 13th and 15th, 1945. The commission assumes a maximum of 25,000 people died during the February air raids in Dresden.

Valentin Falin: Political Memories, Munich 1993

After Adenauer issued the first professional bans against members of the KPD and FDJ in 1950 and negotiated remilitarization with the Western powers, Ulbricht called for the overthrow of the Adenauer government as a prerequisite for achieving German unity.

Douglas MacArthur (1880-1964), US brigadier general in World War I and field marshal in World War II, commanded in the Korean War

(1950-1953) the UN troops. There he pushed for the war to be expanded to include the PRC. Truman supposedly fired him for this reason in 1951. In reality, he sent the failed presidential candidate in 1948 into the political wilderness to become the celebrated candidate

Eliminate "war heroes" as political competitors.

Li Sing-Man (also Rhee Syng-man, 1875-1965) was the first president of South Korea from 1948 to 1960. Rhee advocated a violent unification of the country. In the Korean War from 1950 to 1953, Rhee's government was only saved from early defeat through the intervention of UN troops under US leadership. Kim Il-sung (1912-1994) led the proclaimed in 1948 Democratic People's Republic of Korea as party and government leader.

Based on archival materials,

especially in Moscow, the Institute for Economic History at the Humboldt University in Berlin in 1993 came to a total of at least 54 billion Reichsmarks or German Marks (East) at current prices or at least 14 billion US dollars at 1938 prices. When reparations were declared over in 1953, the SBZ/GDR had made the highest reparations payments known in the 20th century. The GDR's reparations totaled 99.1 billion DM (at 1953 prices) - while those of the Federal Republic of Germany amounted to 2.1 billion DM (at 1953 prices). The GDR/SBZ thus bore 97 to 98 percent of the reparations burden for Germany as a whole - so each East German bore 130 times as much as a West German.

Vasily I. Chuikov (1900-1982), Soviet military leader, two-time "Hero of the Soviet Union", was vice-president from 1946 to 1949.

Head of the SMAD, then its chairman until its dissolution. Afterwards, from 1949 to 1953, he headed the Soviet Control Commission (SKK) and was commander in chief of the Group of Soviet Forces in Germany (GSSD).

The Christian Democrat Georg Dertinger (1902-1968) was foreign minister in the first GDR government and was arrested on January 15, 1953. In 1954, the GDR's highest court sentenced him to 15 years in prison for "espionage and conspiracy." His personal colleague Gerold Rummel fled to the West in 1952, which also brought Dertinger into the focus of the Stasi. Dertinger was pardoned in 1964 and then worked for St. Benno-Verlag in Leipzig.

Areopagus is a rock in Athens not far from the Acropolis, on which in ancient times the supreme

Council met, which is why it had this name. Falin uses this term as a metaphor for the top leadership in the Kremlin.

Francis Bacon (1561-1626), English philosopher, statesman and scientist

Gary Powers (1929-1977) was shot down at high altitude with a new anti-aircraft missile on May 1, 1960 during a US spy flight over Soviet territory near Sverdlovsk. Through the mediation of GDR lawyer Wolfgang Vogel, Powers was exchanged for KGB Colonel Rudolf Abel on February 10, 1962 on the Glienicke Bridge.

Luc de Clapiers, Marquis de Vauvenargues (1715-1747) was a French philosopher, moralist and writer.

On April 17, 1961, there was an invasion of Cuban exiles in the Bay of Pigs, which was massively prepared by the USA

had been made. The CIA operation, for which Kennedy later assumed full responsibility, was successfully repelled by Cuba.

Minutes of the conversation between SED General Secretary Egon Krenz and MS Gorbachev's representative, Valentin Falin, on November 24, 1989 in the Soviet Embassy in Berlin.

Fritz Schäffer (1888-1967) was the first Prime Minister of Bavaria after the war and Federal Minister of Finance from 1949 to 1957 and 1957 to 1961 Federal Minister of Justice. The CSU politician stayed in Berlin on a secret mission in 1955 and 1956 and, as Vice Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, held informal discussions with the Soviet Ambassador Pushkin and the Deputy Defense Minister of the GDR, Vincenz Müller.

Reinhold Maier (1889-1971) was the first

Prime Minister of Baden-Württemberg and the only Prime Minister that the FDP ever appointed. As a Reichstag member of the German State Party, Maier agreed to the Nazi Enabling Act on March 23, 1933, together with the other four liberal Reichstag members Hermann Dietrich, Theodor Heuss, Heinrich Landahl and Ernst Lemmer.

John Foster Dulles (1888-1959) was US Secretary of State from 1953 to 1959.

Otto John (1909-1997) was the first president of the Federal Office for the Protection of the Constitution (from 1950 to 1954) and came to the GDR at the end of July 1954, although it is still unclear today whether he took this step voluntarily or was kidnapped by the KGB. He was interrogated in Moscow for four months, then returned to the GDR capital, where

In lectures and publications he criticized the remilitarization of the Federal Republic of Germany, Adenauer's divisive politics and the involvement of old Nazis such as Theodor Oberländer, Hans Globke and Reinhard Gehlen. After the first year, in December 1955, he left for West Berlin. On December 22, 1956, he was sentenced to four years in prison for treason and was pardoned by Federal President Heuss in 1958. Until his death, he maintained his claim that he had been kidnapped. The political scientist Helmut Jäckel judged in Zeit 28/2004: "Significant evidence says: The secret keeper Otto John voluntarily went to East Berlin for talks on July 20, 1954. Inwardly moved by a naive, patriotic impetus to help advance German unity on his own, he did not expect that he would be able to return to the western part of Berlin

could be relocated. When he became aware of this, he may have believed that he could correct a gross mistake with an even bigger one." The historian Erik Gieseke shared these doubts in 2005: "One can come to different opinions about the assessment of the facts. So far there is no accessible conclusive evidence that John went to East Berlin voluntarily and that he became a traitor there. All statements to this effect are based on circumstantial evidence or witness statements." The newspaper publisher Axel Cäser Springer (1912-1985) prescribed four principles for all employees to work according to in the editorial offices: "1. The unconditional commitment to the peaceful restoration of German unity in freedom. 2. Bringing about reconciliation between Jews and Germans, which also includes supporting the right to life of the

Israeli people. 3. The rejection of any kind of political totalitarianism. 4. The defense of the free social market economy. In order to achieve a patriotic reunification of Germany, Springer met with Nikita Khrushchev in 1958. However, apart from a detailed interview for the world, the meeting remained inconclusive. In the same newspaper on June 6, 2009, the contemporary historian and "Stasi enlightener" Jochen Staadt claimed: In 1958 "the publisher made a somewhat naive attempt to bring about a solution to the German question in discussions with Khrushchev. The SED leadership watched this with extreme suspicion, because any agreement between Moscow and the Federal Republic would have potentially damaged the GDR. Back then, Axel Springer sought change, if you will, through rapprochement. It's funny: Not because he's a cold one

He was a warrior, but because he sought a peaceful settlement with the Soviet Union, his publishing house got in the way of the SED and the Stasi." Question from the newspaper: "Are we understanding correctly that Ulbricht feared that something like a policy of détente could come from the Springer publishing house?" The second interviewee, the historian Stefan Wolle, responded: "Exactly. At that time, Springer had criticized Adenauer's policies very sharply. And he wanted to try to free the GDR from the Soviet Union's sphere of influence in direct talks with Moscow. Only when this attempt failed did Springer make a U-turn and take a sharp stance against the GDR. From then on, the Stasi tried to infiltrate the publishing house.

Transcript of a conversation between

LI Brezhnev and Erich Honecker on July 28, 1970, in "Documents" that Erich Honecker presented to the members in February 1989

and candidates of the Politburo of the SED Central Committee handed over.

Herbert Mies

Revolution in the Tsar's saloon car

Herbert Mies, born in 1929, typesetter, member of the central office since 1949 (until 1953), chairman of the illegal FDJ in the Federal Republic of Germany until 1956. Member of the Central Committee since 1954, candidate for the Politburo of the illegal KPD since 1963. 1954 co-founder of

"Student courier", which appeared in 1957

"concretely" worked out. Co-founder of the DKP in 1969, initially deputy party chairman from 1973 to 1990

Chairman of the party. After his resignation, honorary chairman of the Mannheim history and politics discussion group and chairman of the Mannheim-Schönau workers' welfare organization.

In November 1960, representatives of 81 communist and workers' parties met in Moscow.

The delegation of the banned KPD was led by party chairman Max Reimann<sup>1</sup>, whose personal advisor I was. The Politburo members Oskar Neumann and Jupp Schleifstein also belonged to it.

We traveled from Berlin in one

Special train together with the SED delegation. Otto Grotewohl was also on the train, but he was going for medical treatment.

There was a three-hour stop in Brest, we changed the subframes of the wagons, and saloon cars that had already been used by the Tsar were attached. Werner Eberlein, who was interpreting for Ulbricht, came by and said that his boss wanted to have dinner with us and discuss a few things. Ulbricht greeted us with the remark: "Well, have you finished the speech yet?" We said no. Then we should talk about it, he said. »If you want, you can

"You take notes," he said in my direction. I understood him.

We assumed that Ulbricht would prepare us for the confrontation between the CPSU and the Chinese party, because the conflict between the two largest communist parties obviously had an impact on everyone. But Ulbricht brushed off the topic straight away. Instead, he talked about the situation of the working class in the Federal Republic and appeared to be well informed. Shortly before, there had been the Metal Workers' Association Day and works council elections had been held. He said that the resolutions and the

Speech by Otto Brenner<sup>2</sup> represented the "attempt at an independent trade union policy and alternative". On the basis of this, we should now "raise all fundamental questions and explain the perspectives" in companies and in the unions. We must work "smartly and carefully" in the unions and exercise caution in our contacts with union officials; we must not endanger them.

I sensed that the union issue was very close to his heart, and he seemed to be quite sympathetic to it based on his own experiences to know well.

He then spoke about the effectiveness of our party's political work. What about legal propaganda work? Are we reaching the masses? How does the West German working class relate to the West Berlin question<sup>3</sup>?

It was not unexpected that a scandal that had been simmering for years arose in Moscow.

The comrades in Beijing followed the line of the XX. Party congress and said that the leadership of the CPSU was moving away from Marxism-Leninism. For them, for example, Khrushchev's talks with US President Eisenhower in 1959 or

Refusal of military support for their border conflict with India is an expression of unacceptable concessions. After Stalin's death, Mao Tse-tung<sup>4</sup> also claimed the leadership role in the world communist movement because he was the head of the largest party and had also led such a CP for the longest time, namely since 1943. Six months earlier, in June 1960, Khrushchev had Bucharest at the Romanian Communist Party Congress criticized China's domestic policy and Mao "a nationalist, an adventurer and a deviant," to which Beijing called him a revisionist

described as being "patriarchal, arbitrary and tyrannical". The first man in the CPSU then condemned the leadership in Beijing in an 80-page letter.

Now, we feared, this controversy would be played out openly at the Moscow conference. But Ulbricht obviously did not want to comment on this on the train. And he didn't expose himself at the conference either. The Chinese and Albanian comrades provoked and strained the patience of the conference participants, and we felt we had to respond. Neumann, Schleifstein and I continually reworked the speech.

I showed Ulbricht the third draft. He looked at it and just said that it would be better if we didn't put our work in the Federal Republic so far behind. – In this way he quite cleverly took the tip of our anti-Chinese lance. At the end of the conference, a resolution was passed that avoided a formal split in the world communist movement.

I would experience Ulbricht's tactical and strategic sense again eight years later.

Internally we have been discussing the prospects of our actions for a long time. The KPD was in the 50s

The anti-communists were banned and the party worked illegally, which of course had little effect. Since then, we have been fighting to regain legality, but the prospects of the Federal Republic's ruling class changing their ways seemed slim. Nevertheless, this country needed a consistently left-wing, Marxist party. That's why we thought about reconstituting the communist party at the same time. The political leadership of the KPD took the first steps towards this.

We were in Moscow and consulted with the leadership of the CPSU. Except for Ponomarev<sup>5</sup>, who expressed concerns,

were all for it. People in Berlin also agreed, although there was an interesting discussion when it came to the party name. Jupp Ledwohn provoked them by asking what people thought of the German Communist Party instead of the Communist Party of Germany?

Walter Ulbricht said without hesitation that he thought the name was "spot on" because it was a "German party," a party in the Federal Republic that would act and make politics there, and that is how it should be perceived internationally. When Ledwohn asked about this, he confirmed that the name "Socialist

Unity Party of Germany" is and remains the right thing to do: politically and perspectively. We understood.

We occasionally experienced this attitude, which I perceived as a gesture of superiority; I thought that Max Reimann in particular was sometimes treated in a condescending and somewhat self-aggrandizing manner by him.

For example, I remember the 23rd party executive meeting of the KPD on March 18, 1956, a few days after the XXth. Party congress of the CPSU, at which a number of us excitedly criticized Ulbricht because he had shown little heart and feeling for comrades who could not cope with the reckoning with Stalin.

After that meeting in Berlin in the early summer of 1968, Ulbricht said goodbye to each of us with a handshake. The 75-year-old Ulbricht whispered in my ear: "Don't let your elders slow you down."

I was 39 at the time.

This impression that Ulbricht wanted a new political approach that corresponded to political reality - which in a certain sense would also have to mean a break in personnel if it was to be credible - was confirmed to me years later by Max Spangenberg<sup>6</sup>. For Ulbricht it was not just about continuing the fight for the legalization of the KPD, but about continuing it

did not simply accept an undemocratic act and put it on file.

At the same time, however, he wanted to keep the old KPD leadership away from the leadership of the DKP. As is well known, Max Reimann only joined the German Communist Party in 1971 and then became its honorary chairman.

For me, despite all the criticism, what Max Reimann, the then DKP chairman Kurt Bachmann and I wrote to the SED Central Committee in our condolences in August 1973 remains valid:

»We communists in the Federal Republic valued Walter Ulbricht as a highly deserving German official

and the international revolutionary workers movement, who dedicated his life to the liberation struggle of the working class.

Max Reimann (1898-1977), metal worker, full-time KPD functionary since 1921, participant in the armed Ruhr battles in 1923, anti-fascist resistance, 1940 conviction for "preparation for high treason", Sachsenhausen concentration camp until liberation. In 1948 he was chairman of the KPD in the western zones, from 1949 to 1953 he was parliamentary group leader of the KPD in the German Bundestag. After an arrest warrant, he fled to the GDR in 1954. From there he led the banned KPD. Return to the Federal Republic of Germany in 1968. In 1971 he joined the DKP and became its honorary chairman.

Otto Brenner (1907-1972), 1922 member of the German Metal Workers' Association, 1926 SPD, 1931 SAPD, a splinter of the SPD.

Anti-fascist resistance in Hanover, arrested in 1933, sentenced to two years in 1935,

1945 SPD and 1947 district leader of the trade unions in Lower Saxony, organized the first post-war strike there. In 1952 he became second and in 1956 first chairman of IG Metall and in 1961 president of the International Metalworkers' Federation. IG Metall took part in the protests against rearmament and the deployment of nuclear weapons, demonstrated against the federal government at the time of the Spiegel affair and finally stood on the side of the APO at the time of the emergency legislation. "The first civic duty is not calm, not subservience to the authorities, but rather criticism and constant democratic vigilance," was his credo. Brenner was the "programmatic head" of the trade unions in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1950s and 1960s. The

The action program of 1956 and the DGB basic program of 1963 were significantly influenced by Brenner.

The West Berlin question had been preoccupying the GDR since 1958, when Khrushchev brought up the three-state solution. Berlin was located in the territory of the Soviet occupation zone, but was subject to the four-power statute, meaning that it was entirely neither part of the GDR nor the Federal Republic, although the same currency circulated in the three western sectors - West Berlin - as in the Federal Republic of Germany. Moscow wanted West Berlin as a free city, among other things, to close the hole in the fence. The sector borders in Berlin were open, many East Germans fled to the West via West Berlin, and secret services from the West penetrated unnoticed into the East. The GDR suffered great material damage due to this unclear border location

arose, and the danger of war was also real. According to Adenauer's understanding, the GDR should be "liberated," and since it was not a foreign country for Bonn, this could have been done at any time with a police operation. But that would have been an attack on the Warsaw Pact, to which the GDR was a member, and would oblige the alliance to take action. As is well known, most wars began with border conflicts. Therefore, Ulbricht's question of how the West German working class reflected on this problem was not unimportant.

Mao Tse-tung (1893-1976) led the Chinese Communist Party from 1943 until his death. On October 1, 1949, he proclaimed the People's Republic of China and his policies ensured that the backward agricultural state became an economic, military and political power. However, campaigns initiated by him ("Great Leap Forward", 1958-1961, and the "Cultural Revolution",

1966-1976) led to significant setbacks that claimed millions of lives. Deng Xiaoping, the later reform politician, did not deny his share of responsibility for the Great Leap and warned against placing all blame on Mao. On April 1, 1980, he said: "Mao's brain was

overheating back then. But so do our heads. No one contradicted him, not even me." No comparable statements were heard from Stalin's comrades-in-arms.

Boris N. Ponomaryov (1905-1995) was a trained historian who also worked with Herbert Wehner in the Comintern. Wehner judged him: Ponomaryov

»was personally characterized by great reserve, pronounced modesty in his demeanor and the ability to listen to his counterpart; he belonged to a special type of young Russian functionary who went through the school of personal

Stalin's surroundings. Ponomaryov was secretary of the CPSU Central Committee from 1961 to 1986 and was responsible for the party's international relations and ideological issues.

Max Spangenberg (1907-1987), employee of the Communist International in Moscow before 1933, Spanish fighter, from 1951 editor-in-chief of the Berliner Zeitung and from 1954 until its dissolution in 1971 head of the work office of the Western Commission of the Politburo of the SED Central Committee. Afterwards he worked at the Institute for Marxism-Leninism (IML) in Berlin.

Yevgeny Tyashelnikov

His interest in youth issues was clearly great

Yevgeny M. Tyashelnikov, born in 1928, 1950 graduate of the Pedagogical Institute in Chelyabinsk, 1951 member of the CPSU, 1960 doctor of historical sciences, 1961 to 1964 rector of the Pedagogical Institute in Chelyabinsk, then secretary of the regional committee of the CPSU in the Chelyabinsk region, 1971

until 1990 member of the Central Committee of the CPSU,

1st Secretary of the Komsomol Central Committee from 1968 to 1977, then, until 1982, head of the Propaganda Department of the CPSU Central Committee. 1982 to 1990 Ambassador of the USSR to Romania. Retired Ambassador of the USSR.

We knew Walter Ulbricht very well in the USSR. We valued him as a courageous fighter against Nazism, as an upright internationalist and good friend, as a hero of the Soviet Union.<sup>7</sup>

As an aspirant at Moscow State University, I visited with friends in 1960

of the 15th anniversary of the victory over fascism, the Museum of German Antifascists in Krasnogorsk<sup>8</sup>. There we learned about Walter Ulbricht's activities among the German prisoners of war and his contribution to the founding and work of the National Committee "Free Germany". I met Walter Ulbricht personally for the first time on March 30, 1966, when he spoke to us, the delegates to the XXIII. Party Congress of the CPSU, spoke.

I met him personally during the International Consultation of Communist and Workers' Parties, which took place in Moscow from June 5th to 17th, 1969. At a meeting with

We learned about his battle-filled youth. He mentioned how he joined the Socialist Youth organization at the age of 15, became a member of the SPD in 1912, joined Karl Liebknecht's group and the Spartacus League in 1918. He reported on the days of the November Revolution in 1918, when he was a member of the Workers' and Soldiers' Council in Leipzig, and how he later, together with Ernst Thälmann and Wilhelm Pieck, helped to develop the KPD into a Marxist-Leninist mass party.

What was completely surprising to us was that he was also a communist in 1928

All-Union Party (Bolsheviks), WKP (B) for short, which was renamed the CPSU in 1952. And he represented the KPD on the Executive Committee of the Communist International.

In our conversation, Walter Ulbricht was interested in the cooperation between the Komsomol and the FDJ. He asked how the CPSU organizes youth policy. Ulbricht suggested that this cooperation should be made closer and more effective and welcomed the proposal to hold a "Festival of Friendship between the Youth of the USSR and the GDR" in Dresden in 1970.

To the 20th anniversary of the GDR in October 1969 he invited a delegation from the

Komsomol entered Berlin. I had the honor of being part of the party and state delegation led by LI Brezhnev, which met Walter Ulbricht several times. When we arrived on the 5th

When we arrived in the GDR capital in October 1969, we saw posters everywhere with a charming girl and the statement: "I'm twenty."

I remember with inner emotion the ceremony in which delegations from 84 countries took part. In his speech, Walter Ulbricht painted an impressive picture of the achievements of the working people of the GDR. However, he also spoke about the still unresolved problems. For him

both belonged together.

I also like to think of Brezhnev's welcoming words to the GDR, spoken out of inner conviction: "Socialism won irrevocably on your soil. That is the will of the people of the GDR. It is anchored in the socialist constitution, which was approved by a referendum. The socialist achievements cannot be taken away from the working people by any means, neither by military, political, nor by intrigues and provocations."

We experienced a military parade in Berlin, a demonstration of the

Working people and the manifestation of the youth, which was concluded with a march by a thousands-strong FDJ orchestra and a torchlight procession. Leonid Ilyich enthusiastically attended this thrilling show for over five hours. In the evening he and Ulbricht met with the leading representatives of the Warsaw Treaty countries; the Romanian delegation stayed away from the meeting. A very open discussion took place on the most important international problems, with the focus being on the preparation of a conference on security and cooperation in Europe as well as the

Relations with the USA and China.

During this time, our Komsomol delegation negotiated in the Central Council of the FDJ. In the end, they signed a cooperation plan for 1970. With Günther Jahn, Egon Krenz, Frank Bochow and their colleagues, we were at the Brandenburg Gate and met with GDR border guards and members of the Soviet Armed Forces Group in Germany. Its commander-in-chief, Army General Viktor G. Kulikov, informed us about the history of the Berlin Wall. He gave details of how the division of Germany and Europe developed

and how the eastern border of the Federal Republic of Germany became the state border with the GDR. He spoke of the confrontation of the two most powerful military blocs in the world, NATO and the Warsaw Treaty Organization. Kulikov recalled the Declaration of the Warsaw Treaty States of August 1961, which stated that the governments of the states participating in the Warsaw Treaty addressed the People's Chamber and the GDR government with a proposal to establish such an order on the borders with West Berlin reliably pave the way for subversive activity against the countries of the socialist states

which ensures reliable protection and effective control around the entire territory of West Berlin, including its border with democratic Berlin. I believe that the supreme commander of the Soviet armed forces in Germany wanted to make it clear that the GDR's border security measures were not a solo effort by the GDR or even by Ulbricht, but rather a decision by the alliance.

After all, the western state border of the GDR was the western border of the Warsaw Pact and the eastern border of NATO.

I remember Leonid's words in this context

I. Brezhnev during the celebrations for the 20th anniversary of the GDR: »We are, so to speak, doubly allies - both according to the treaty between our two countries and according to the Warsaw Treaty. Anyone who intends to test the strength of our friendship, the inviolability of the borders of our states, had better know in advance: he will encounter crushing resistance of formidable strength - I repeat - formidable strength from the Soviet Armed Forces and the entire socialist community ."

A little more than twenty years after LI Brezhnev spoke so clearly about relations with the GDR, the authorities of the united Germany, including the judicial ones, ignored these historical facts. The last chairman of the State Council of the GDR, Egon Krenz, Defense Minister Heinz Keßler, the head of the main staff of the National People's Army Fritz Streletz, generals, officers and soldiers of the border troops were given long prison sentences for the alleged murder of GDR citizens who had crossed the border, sentenced.

On June 7, 1998, Marshal of the Soviet Union Viktor G. Kulikov and Army General Anatoly I. Gribkov stated in a letter to the Berlin Regional Court that the GDR was not sovereign in the military-political and military field. Its geomilitary location made it an outpost of the Warsaw Treaty States. Because the GDR was on a front line, so to speak, a 500,000-strong elite group of the Soviet Armed Forces was stationed on its territory, unique in its combat power and equipped with the most modern weapons technology, including nuclear weapons.

The front section of the first strategic defense line of the United Armed Forces of the Warsaw Treaty ran along the state border between the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany.

The German courts did not even consider it necessary to hear as witnesses Kulikov, Gribkov and Abrassimov, who represented the USSR for 17 years as ambassador to the GDR.

The fact that even Mikhail S. Gorbachev's letters were ignored was evidence of the bias of the German courts and the European Court of Human Rights. The ex-president of the USSR, who is otherwise popular

"Architects of German unity", even called the "best German", and also a Nobel Prize winner, had affirmed: "The political and legal persecution of leading personalities, army leaders, border guards and thousands of citizens of the former GDR is a witch hunt. The attempt to blame Egon Krenz and his colleagues for the situation at the border is nothing other than political revenge. The opening of the GDR's western border in November 1989 and Egon Krenz's order not to use force prevented military actions with far-reaching consequences.

There was no German-German border

only a border between the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR, not an "inner German" border, but a border between two states, two subjects of international law that belonged to the UN and international alliances. As is well known, the border law of the GDR did not differ from the corresponding legislative standards of the Federal Republic of Germany.

During the existence of both German states, the Federal Republic of Germany never called for condemnation of the GDR under international law for its border regime, neither in the UN nor within the framework of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. The Federal Republic concluded the treaty with the GDR in 1972

Basics of relations between the two states. On March 12, 1985, Helmut Kohl and Erich Honecker agreed in Moscow: "The inviolability of borders and respect for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states in Europe within their current borders (are) a fundamental condition for peace."

For this reason, the criminal prosecution of GDR leaders, military personnel and civilians in unified Germany retroactively represents a violation of the European Convention on Human Rights. It is

at the same time an insult to the allies of the former GDR, the sovereign dignity of the Russian Federation, the legal successor to the Soviet Union, and the memory of 27 million Soviet people who lost their lives in the fight against fascism.

In our opinion, the legal proceedings against state and military figures in the GDR were conducted in a biased manner. The judgments made have grossly violated their rights, their honor and their dignity.

Those in power in Germany, on the other hand, claim: "The federal government is in the course of the

German unification did not enter into any obligations under international law that could have limited the activities of the legal system towards state and political figures of the former GDR before Russia or the other states participating in the Two Plus Four Treaty."

In a statement from the Russian Foreign Ministry on November 18, 1999, it was emphasized: "The impression is that the stubborn consistency with which political figures from the former GDR are held legally responsible in the unified Germany is the goal

to settle political accounts with the former GDR and to portray the formerly sovereign state, recognized by the international community, as illegitimate and its leaders as a group of criminals. Furthermore, as many experts, including German ones, believe, the verdict in Krenz's case does not contribute to the process of overcoming the psychological fragmentation of the German nation, which continues to this day, a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall not a thing of the past. Only the cessation of criminal prosecution of political and

military personalities, from GDR citizens will help to break the vicious circle of political revenge and revenge, and will contribute to consolidating Germany's international reputation as a constitutional state and deepening cooperation between Russia and the Federal Republic." The Federal Republic, however, is demonstratively ignoring the earlier agreements .

This was really out of the question during the 20th anniversary of the GDR and when we met Walter Ulbricht, but rather twenty years later, on the 40th anniversary.

anniversary, at least to some extent.

Another meeting with Walter Ulbricht was associated with an important event in the history of the Komsomol and FDJ. It was the German-Soviet Youth Festival in Dresden. Our delegation arrived in Berlin on October 2, 1970. It included more than 500 young activists, excellent schoolchildren, students and army personnel, talented scientists, cultural workers and Olympic champions. Among the guests of honor were heroes of the Soviet Union such as Army General Ivan I. Fedjuninsky, the cosmonaut Valery Bykovsky, the test pilot Georgy Mosolov, the writer Boris Polevoy, the

Film director Roman Karmen, the composer Alexandra Pakhmutova, the poet Nikolai Dobronravov, Professor NI Sokolov, who was involved in saving the treasures of the Dresden Picture Gallery<sup>9</sup>, and the six-time Olympic champion Lidija Skoblikova.

The ceremonial opening of the festival in Dresden took place on October 3, 1970. Despite the pouring rain, over 100,000 young people from all regions of the republic gathered. The party and state leadership of the GDR, led by Walter Ulbricht, and the Soviet ambassador Pyotr A. Abrassimov appeared. The

Festival flame, in which the Eternal Flame from the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier on the Kremlin Wall and the Eternal Flame from the Memorial to the Victims of Fascism and Militarism in Berlin merged, rose up. The anthems of the GDR and the Soviet Union rang out. The 1st

Secretary of the Central Council of the FDJ Günther Jahn addressed the delegates and guests of the festival in a speech. For the youth of the GDR, he explained, the Festival of Friendship with the Youth of the Soviet Union was the highlight of the Lenin Year<sup>10</sup>. He reported passionately about what the youth

of the country in Lenin's anniversary year. I conveyed warm greetings to Brezhnev and wished the festival a good run on his behalf. The relations between Komsomol and FDJ, I said, are filled with the spirit of brotherhood and successful cooperation. The youth of the Soviet Union and the GDR fought together for peace and security in Europe and across the planet, stood up against the crimes of imperialism in Indochina and the Middle East, and strengthened the unity of the international youth movement.

Walter Ulbricht also addressed the participants and spoke of the importance of expanding and deepening the cooperation between the FDJ and the Komsomol and strengthening the friendship between the peoples, between the youth of the GDR and the Soviet Union. He reported on the successes of the republic and highlighted the importance of Lenin's speech

3rd Congress of the Russian Communist Youth Union for the Education of Present and Future Generations. The Central FDJ Orchestra powerfully intoned Soviet and German songs.

Walter Ulbricht then gave for



the Soviet delegation received a reception. He warmly welcomed us and proposed a toast to the unbreakable friendship between our parties, the peoples and our youth. On behalf of the Komsomol Central Committee, I presented him with the badge of honor "For active Komsomol work" and a relief with the heads of Marx, Engels and Lenin.

Together with Ulbricht I visited an extremely interesting exhibition of young inventors and rationalizers

"Mass of the Masters of Tomorrow"<sup>5</sup>. The economic impact of the implemented rationalization proposals and inventions exceeded 100 million

Mark, I was told. The scientific conference "The Creative Contribution of Youth to the Scientific and Technical Revolution" also took place in Leipzig. Günther Jahn and I, the heads of the FDJ and Komsomol, gave a lecture there. Young scientists, engineers, workers and students from our countries took part in the lively discussion. The day of remembrance of the Soviet soldiers and the German anti-fascists who died in the fight against fascism was moving. Rallies took place at the graves of the fallen, at memorials and obelisks, and wreaths and...

Flower arrangements laid down by the Komsomol and the FDJ, the Soviet and German youth. Dozens of meetings with the festival's guests of honor took place.

At this point I would like to remind you of Roman Karmen's speech. People's Artist of the USSR, Lenin Prize winner and world-famous documentarian, film director

"Destruction of the German troops near Moscow", "Leningrad in battle",

"Berlin" and "Court of the Nations" about the Nuremberg Trials. He expressed what moved us and what we also associated with the work of Walter Ulbricht:

»I'm in the GDR again, in the old one

Dresden, which shone in the bright light of colorful flags, flowers, and the laughter of youth. The young hosts of the German land welcomed the guests from the Soviet Union in a friendly manner.

And the feeling of joy that I am taking part in this bright holiday of youth never leaves me. I look into the faces of the young Germans and before my eyes there are images that have become indelible milestones in my biography.

This is them: 1926. As a young photo correspondent, I filmed the arrival of the first German workers' delegation in Moscow. I

I remember the fists raised in the Red Front salute, the fiery speeches, and the enthusiastic greetings of Muscovites who received their class brothers. At the same time, in the 1920s, I filmed Clara Zetkin. I also remember Red Square, the funeral marches. I filmed the wistful faces of the German and Soviet comrades who buried the urn containing Clara Zetkin's remains at the Kremlin wall.

August 1936. Barcelona. The large courtyard of the Karl Marx barracks, where the Thälmann battalion was set up before going to the front. It was the one

first armed detachment of anti-fascists, which later formed the core of the international brigades. During these years, the German anti-fascists took up armed struggle on Spanish soil with Hitler's armies, which were used to suppress the Spanish Republic. In those distant years I became friends with the legendary singer Ernst Busch, the writer Ludwig Renn, with many German boys who fought shoulder to shoulder with our Soviet volunteers outside the walls of Madrid.

In the spring of 1945 I filmed Berlin, which was in ruins

years of war was a symbol of evil and terror for millions of people. I looked at the children who were fed by Soviet soldiers from the field kitchens and thought that it was their responsibility to build a new Germany.

Years passed. I often stayed in the GDR, made many new friends, and met old comrades in arms with whom I had fraternized on Spanish soil. Berlin and other cities rose from ruins. A new generation grew up. I am delighted by young people, their civil wisdom, their sense of internationalism, their respect for the revolutionary ones

Traditions of the German communists, the German working class. Looking at your faces, my thoughts unconsciously return to the spring of 1945. Weren't you those little creatures I met in burning Berlin?

I am pleased by the unity of those whose battle cry is Red Front! became a symbol of the revolutionary struggle of the proletarians of the whole world, of those who fought on Spanish soil in the Thälmann Battalion, of those who continued the struggle in Nazi death camps, and of those who were born during the war years and into conscious life

as a young citizen of the first socialist state on German soil. I am pleased that today there are in a row both communists who have been hardened in many battles and young citizens of the republic who are future-oriented, bold, full of plans, tireless in their work and in their knowledge of the world, masters of tomorrow in the truest sense of the word day.

To the Germans who created a socialist state, who raised a new generation, a bold, energetic generation, who continued the revolutionary traditions of the German working class,

We, the Soviet filmmakers, dedicated our film 'Comrade Berlin'. In the title of the film we put the feelings of friendship that the Soviet people feel towards the GDR, the country that is at the forefront of our camp of socialism. That's why, without thinking twice, I tore myself away from my work and my worries about old age and flew to Dresden, to the city that was filled with the smiles of blooming youth. I am filled with a feeling of joy at new meetings with the cheerful, wonderful youth of socialist Germany, the country full of good ones

Hopes and bright horizons.«

In those days I also met 66-year-old Lotte Ulbricht, a woman of short stature, energetic, clever, modest, tactful and attentive. She told how she joined the KPD in 1921 and traveled to Moscow the following year to work in the Communist Youth International: "Since then, youth and party work has become the main meaning of my life. I am proud that I was lucky enough to see and hear Lenin. At the beginning of the 1930s I lived again for four years with my first husband, the communist Erich Wendt<sup>11</sup>, who was in the 1930s

One of its victims was mass reprisals in Moscow. I later married Walter Ulbricht and became his loyal comrade in arms." After the festival we visited a GSSD unit. The museum in Karlshorst, where the unconditional surrender of Hitler's Germany was sealed, left an indelible impression.<sup>12</sup> We visited Treptower Park and laid wreaths at the graves of honor and the monument to the soldiers of the Soviet Army who died in the battles for Berlin, which was laid on May 8th was inaugurated in 1949. We observed a minute's silence to honor all those who...

who gave their all in the fight against Hitler's fascism, who defended the honor, freedom and independence of the Soviet homeland and saved humanity from the brown plague. It was impossible to hold back the tears.

Everyone, really every member of our delegation, had lost at least one family member during the tumultuous years: their father, their grandfather, their brother, their mother, their sister...

On the evening of October 8th, the Soviet ambassador invited people to dinner. Among the guests were Walter Ulbricht, his wife Lotte, members of the

Politburo of the Central Committee of the SED as well as outstanding personalities from science, culture and sport. The GDR head of state viewed the Festival of Friendship as an important political event.

After I returned to Moscow, I reported to Brezhnev about the main results of the festival and conveyed to him not only greetings but also Ulbricht and Stoph's request to improve economic, scientific and cultural cooperation between the USSR and the GDR. We called it "deepening" back then.

The General Secretary asked specifically about the nature of the relationship between Ulbricht and his comrades, and he expressed noticeable interest in Honecker and Stoph.

In the summer of 1973 I took part in the Xth World Festival of Youth and Students in Berlin with a Komsomol delegation, which was attended by more than...

25,000 young people from 140 countries came. This was a magnificent meeting of the planet's youth! We were therefore saddened by the absence of Walter Ulbricht, who was ill and who had also done so much to prepare this meeting. With

It was with deep pain that we received the news that Walter Ulbricht had died on August 1, 1973, a few days after the festival opened. He was one of the most important leaders of the GDR and the international communist and workers movement, a true patriot, internationalist, friend and teacher of the youth.

In 1963, Walter Ulbricht was awarded the honorary title of "Hero of the Soviet Union" by the Supreme Soviet of the USSR.

Prisoner of War Camp No. 27 was located in Krasnogorsk, which was heavily fought over during the Battle of Moscow in 1941. The National Committee "Free Germany" (NKFD) was founded there in July 1943, two months later

later the "Association of German Officers" (BDO). German emigrants such as Walter Ulbricht, Wilhelm Pieck and other Communist Party officials played a key role in this. In the former building of the Central Antifascist School for Prisoners of War, the "Memorial Museum of German Antifascists" was opened in 1985 in the presence of representatives from the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany. Today the institution is a branch of the Moscow Central Museum of the Great Patriotic War.

The Dresden State Picture Gallery had moved the works of art out of well-founded fear of destruction. These approximately one and a half thousand paintings were considered missing until 1955 when the government of the Soviet Union returned 1,240 paintings after restoration. In 1963, the GDR announced that 206 works of art had been destroyed and 507 were still missing. Today will still be

always around 450 paintings missing.

The founder of the Soviet Union was born on April 22, 1870 as Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov in Simbirsk, which is why the year in which he would have turned 100 was declared Lenin Year and a large number of events and honors, competitions and conferences were dedicated to this occasion.

Erich Wendt (1902-1965), trained typesetter, 1925/26 editor at the publishing house of the Communist Youth International in Moscow, then worked at the Central Committee of the KJVD in Berlin. 1931 emigration to the Soviet Union, 1936 victim of the party

purge and expulsion from the KPD, 1937 to 1939 exile in Siberia, 1941 further deportation. From 1942 to 1947 he worked at Radio Moscow, then returned to Berlin and headed the Aufbauverlag. From 1949 to 1965 he was a member of the Presidential Council

Cultural Association of the GDR, from 1951 to 1953 he was its first federal secretary and since 1958 vice president. From 1950 to 1958 Erich Wendt was a member of the People's Chamber and chairman of the Kulturbund parliamentary group. From 1953 to 1957 he headed the Lenin department in the Institute for Marxism-Leninism at the Central Committee of the SED (IML). From 1957 to 1965 he was deputy and then state secretary in the GDR Ministry of Culture. In 1963, Erich Wendt played a key role in the negotiations for the pass agreement with West Berlin. Wendt was initially the partner of Lotte Kühn (married Ulbricht), then was in a relationship with Charlotte Treuber, a former partner of Herbert Wehner  
On the anniversary of the liberation in 2013, the museum in the former Wehrmacht casino was reconstructed as the German-Russian Museum Berlin-Karlshorst, as it is

since 1995, reopened after a year of renovation. An exhibition report in the Berliner Tagesspiegel on April 25, 2013 said: "The reopened German-Russian Museum traces a shocking trail of crimes: the merciless persecution of political cadres, the starvation of the Soviet civilian population and prisoners of war, the scorched earth policy. « A documentary film » shows the German commander-in-chief General Field Marshal Keitel, who was vain until the last second and who was later executed as one of the main war criminals.

Soviet Marshal Zhukov looks suitably serious. Is he, the greatest of all Soviet war heroes, thinking at this moment of the hundreds of thousands of fallen Red Army soldiers who marked his victories as well as his defeats? There is hardly any talk of victories and defeats in the museum anymore. A single

One of the ten themed rooms is dedicated to the chronicle of the war. And even that is cursory enough."

constitutional state

Erich Buchholz

The 1968 Constitution and the democratic administration of justice

Erich Buchholz, born in 1927, studied law at the Humboldt University in Berlin from 1948 to 1952, received his doctorate in 1956, and his habilitation in 1963. Working as a lecturer since 1957, from 1965 as a professor with a teaching position, later full professor and head of the Institute for Criminal Law at the HUB. 1976 Director of the Law Section and Chairman of the Scientific Department

Advisory Board for Law to the Minister for Higher Education and Technical Education. Since 1990, he has worked as a lawyer, particularly defending border guards in politically motivated cases and the Politburo member Erich Mückenberger.

Due to his work as a member of parliament in the Weimar Republic, Walter Ulbricht had practical political experience in (capitalist) state practice and politics. After the liberation from Hitler's fascism, he played a key role in promoting the establishment of an anti-fascist democratic order

and the development of the first five-year plan, the decisive breakthrough in the development of an anti-fascist-democratic economy - a planning work that, as I experienced at the time, earned him recognition even among skeptics.

In the fight against external and internal enemies or opponents, he was dependent on allies and advisors in the country and from friends. Not all advice or recommendations turned out to be good and happy. In my opinion, the decision of the 2nd party conference of the SED in July 1952 to create the foundations of socialism in the GDR resulted from various reasons

reasons as hasty and not appropriate to the internal conditions of the GDR. In the criminal area, this decision was reflected in the adoption of a law on the protection of public property and other social property from January 2, which was politically and legally incorrect.

October 1952 again. This law was passed at the insistence of the SMAD and was a copy of Stalin's decree on the protection of public property in the Soviet Union. After a series of corrections, it was finally replaced by the Criminal Law Supplementary Act of January 1st.

Replaced in February 1958.

Ulbricht considered it necessary on the 2nd

April 1958 to once again articulate the Marxist-Leninist positions on the state and law at a conference in Babelsberg ("The state theory of Marxism-Leninism and its application in Germany").

It also featured Karl Polak's contributions and statements<sup>1</sup>, some of which turned out to be misguided and harmful. After the conference and in its implementation, for example, the legal branch of administrative law was abolished.<sup>2</sup>

In the field of criminal law, a fundamental statement on the assessment of crimes in the GDR proved to be important. A distinction was made

between those crimes that arose from antagonistic (anti-class) contradictions and those from non-antagonistic contradictions. This was reflected in the 1968 GDR criminal code in the distinction between "crimes" and "misdemeanors".

With this remark, Ulbricht did not make himself the judge or arbitrator in the dispute between the lawyers, but rather gave them the opportunity to find a solution themselves.

The development of the scientific field of criminology, a criminology based

of Marxism-Leninism, was promoted by the Babelsberg Conference.<sup>3</sup>

Ulbricht was constructive and offered ideas that were often not easy to implement, such as agricultural cooperatives. He knew about the problems of collectivization in the USSR. He therefore advocated the voluntary association of farmers and supported gradual forms of cooperatives by creating three different types of agricultural production cooperatives (LPG) in which the socialization of land, livestock and

devices should be done differently. This meant that the land that belonged to the farmers as property - de jure and in the land register - remained their property. Only the management was carried out collectively.

This regulation played a major role after 1990 and in German case law.

Ulbricht later advocated that small traders, especially business people, be included in the socialist retail sector as commission traders and that company owners be included in the socialist economy through the purchase of company shares ("semi-state")

integrate. The entrepreneurs remained managers of their companies and made significant contributions, including for foreign trade.<sup>4</sup>

This decision was of considerable importance, not least for alliance policy considerations.

One of Ulbricht's most far-reaching political achievements is - in my view - the creation of a "collective head of state", the State Council. The members of this body were elected by the People's Chamber and were responsible to it. It acted as a democratic body between parliamentary sessions and was active in areas outside its competence

of the Council of Ministers<sup>5</sup>, for example for the relations between citizens and the state, between the local people's representatives and the parliament and, last but not least, for the administration of justice, without interfering with their independence. The independence of the judiciary remained.

The judges of the Supreme Court (OG) elected by the People's Chamber and the Attorney General had to face the questions and criticisms of the State Council without impairing the independence of the judges and the independence of the public prosecutor's office, as guaranteed by the constitution.

With this in mind, April 4th

In 1963, the "Decree of the State Council of the German Democratic Republic on the basic tasks and functioning of the organs of the administration of justice"<sup>6</sup> was passed. This marked the beginning of a new chapter in the development of a modern democratic administration of justice. The principles laid down there were also reflected in the GDR constitution of 1968.

The State Council also initiated the drafting of the Criminal Code, the draft of which was discussed publicly and therefore came into being on a broad democratic basis - a fundamental difference to practice

the Federal Republic, where the public was and is generally not involved in the drafting and preparation of laws. A commission of the State Council, not the Ministry of Justice, was responsible for drafting the new GDR criminal code, even though Justice Minister Hilde Benjamin chaired this commission.

The drafting of the 1968 Constitution and the development of the administration of justice in the GDR are closely and specifically related. The constitution, adopted by referendum, was approved by eleven million citizens

been discussed in a large popular debate. Over 12,000 suggestions were submitted, resulting in 118 changes to the original draft text in the preamble and 55 articles. In Section 1, the political and economic foundations of the socialist society in the GDR were constitutionally defined. The GDR's national economy was then based on socialist ownership of the means of production, which was precisely defined in detail, with public ownership taking the central place. From this it followed: the citizens of the GDR, the state people of the GDR, were

collective owners of natural and economic resources and values. They were therefore the holders and carriers of economic and political power.

According to Article 48 7, the People's Chamber was the highest state power body in the GDR. The Council of Ministers, on the other hand, represented the GDR's economy in the interests of its citizens. (see FN 5)

It is necessary to emphasize this so emphatically because in the Federal Republic of Germany (as elsewhere in the capitalist world) it appears as if "power" lies with the Federal Chancellor, and therefore in parliamentary elections

The supposed sovereign, the people, will decide who should have "power" in the future. Regardless of the outcome of the parliamentary elections, real power in the state remains with the owners of the means of production, namely the capitalist class.

Already in

In the "Communist Manifesto," Marx and Engels formulated it succinctly: "Modern state power is only a committee that manages the common business of the entire bourgeois class." The entire state structure with parliament, government and ministries, etc., carries out these common business in the

Overall interest of the economically ruling class, within which the big capitals set the tone. This state building was ultimately built under capitalism, as in the Federal Republic of Germany, for the sole purpose of creating the belief in the supposed sovereign, the voter, that he had something to say and that he was determining the character of society with his vote. We sadly know from history that when this rare case of a change of political power through elections actually occurs, this democratic decision will be reversed by force. Remember Spain 1936 or Chile 1973.

Section II, Chapter 1 of the GDR constitution regulated the basic rights and basic duties of citizens. This statement is of fundamental and far-reaching importance. The Basic Law is limited to traditional political and civil rights - as if a community could exist without the obligations of its members! Even in the family it is self-evident that each member has, above all, responsibilities. The BGB also assumes mutual rights and obligations - particularly clearly in the case of contractual relationships. No legal system only grants rights. The basic law is

therefore hypocritical because it pretends that citizens have rights but no obligations.

However, very drastic legal obligations arise from the Federal Republic of Germany legal system - not only from private law, but especially from public law, tax, administrative and criminal law. If these are not met, there are often significant consequences. The GG doesn't talk about that, and not by chance. Because the GG suggests as if the fundamental rights, especially the main fundamental right of Article 2 - the general right to freedom, the fundamental right to develop one's own personality -

The most important thing not only for the individual, but for society: freedom above all!

Anyone who makes use of this fundamental right to develop their personality in the Federal Republic of Germany can try it out and test it out. He gets to test how far he can go. It was not without reason that an essay on the "Epitome of Freedom" said that it means: "Take what you can get!"

Anyone who makes use of this fundamental right can - as everyday and judicial practice shows - experiment with whether someone who feels their rights have been violated will come forward and call the court.

In practice, it is a matter of testing whether the injured party dares to take legal action against the violator of his rights at the corresponding costs. And experience teaches: very, very many people forego the uncertain, often hopeless legal route that the Basic Law grants them, for various reasons, e.g. B. because of public opinion, reputation or economic losses, etc. When it comes to the law and justice system in the Federal Republic of Germany, it is not just lawyers who repeatedly emphasize that being right and being right are two different things.

The rights that the Basic Law and the laws of the Federal Republic of Germany grant citizens

That's why all too often they remain dead paper!

In diametric contrast to the Basic Law, the GDR constitution regulated basic rights and basic duties. It also incorporated all human rights agreed in the two International Human Rights Conventions of 1966. Although the Federal Republic of Germany has joined both conventions, it still disregards social, economic and cultural human rights with impunity.

By joining the scope of the Basic Law in 1990, the GDR citizens did not gain any substantive rights, especially no fundamental rights, that they did not have

the GDR constitution had already existed. But they lost massive amounts of valuable rights:

the right to work (Article 24),

the right to education (Article 25),

the right to protection of health and employment and to free medical care, including medical assistance, medicines and other medical benefits in kind (Art. 35),

the rights of trade unions and production cooperatives (Articles 44 to 46).

In the GDR constitution, corresponding provisions were made to practically guarantee all fundamental rights

met. The GG, on the other hand, leaves it up to the individual whether and how they make use of the fundamental rights guaranteed to them.

In Article 96 of the GDR Constitution, as in Article 97 of the Basic Law, the independence of judges was enshrined. But the GDR constitution also guaranteed the independence of lay judges, who were fully equal to professional judges, as well as that of the members of the social courts (conflict and arbitration commissions).

Article 99 Paragraph 2 of the GDR Constitution, as well as Article 103 Paragraph 2 of the Basic Law, stipulates that an act can only be criminally liable

applies if the act was punishable by law at the time it was committed (principle of legality or legality). It goes on to say: "Criminal laws have no retroactive effect." This significant prohibition of retroactivity is missing in GG.8

Paragraph 4 of this Article 99 (author GDR) stipulated: "The rights of citizens may only be restricted in connection with criminal proceedings to the extent that this is legally permissible and unavoidable."

Article 100 regulated the conditions for ordering pre-trial detention

and the powers and duties of judges in this context.

Article 101 stated in paragraph 1:

"No one may be deprived of their legal judge" (similar to Art. 104 GG), and in paragraph 2 it said:

"Exceptional courts are not permitted" (also Article 101 GG).

Article 102 read in paragraph 1: "Every citizen has the right to be heard in court" and in paragraph 2: "The right to defense is guaranteed throughout the entire criminal proceedings." The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany does not have a similar provision. There you can only find the weak sentence in Article 103 Paragraph 1: "In court

Everyone has the right to be heard."

No special comments appear to be necessary regarding these generally recognized and customary regulations for the administration of justice. However, the following provisions should be emphasized - especially in contrast to those of the Basic Law - because they clearly show the democratic character of the socialist administration of justice:

Article 91 contains the extremely important provision that characterizes the political character of the GDR constitution: "The generally recognized norms of international law

The law on the punishment of crimes against peace, against humanity and war crimes is directly applicable law.<sup>9</sup> Crimes of this type are not subject to the statute of limitations."

The GDR constitution avoided depriving Nazis and war criminals of punishment through a general statute of limitations that also covered ordinary murder. The corresponding provisions of the GG, which their "fathers" had to include in the GG after the defeat of the fascist aggressor state and in an unusual place, in section

"The federal government and the states," read: "The general rules of international law are part of federal law. They take precedence over the laws and create rights and obligations directly for the residents of the federal territory." (Art. 25) And elsewhere it says:

"Actions that are suitable and are carried out with the intention of disrupting the peaceful coexistence of peoples, especially preparing to wage a war of aggression, are unconstitutional. They are to be punished."<sup>10</sup> (Art. 26, Para. 1)

The GDR constitution of 1968 - which is not only called Ulbricht's

Constitution is called because he was Chairman of the State Council at that time - was, as it were, in anticipation of the UN Convention on the Non-Applicability of Limitation Provisions to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity, which was passed by the XXIII. United Nations General Assembly on November 26, 1968.

The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany did not contain any corresponding provisions. That put Bonn under pressure.

Shortly before the statute of limitations expired, on August 4, 1969, with the help of the 9th Criminal Law Amendment Act in Section 78

of the Criminal Code: "Crimes under Section 220a (genocide) and under Section 211 (murder) do not expire."

As already stated, this happened due to international pressure and not least because of the clear stance of the other German state. Nevertheless, even this statement revealed the character of the Federal Republic. Genocide and individual murder were put on the same level, at least with regard to non-statute of limitations. This equation de facto represents a trivialization of the Nazi and war crimes of the Hitler state.

That was in line with Article 102 of the Basic Law,

with which the death penalty was abolished when the Basic Law came into force in 1949. It has been proven that Nazi and war criminals who were responsible for mass executions and industrial murder benefited from this. The constitution of the GDR, on the other hand, explicitly provided for this punishment, and when the GDR proposed abolishing the death penalty in Moscow in the 1980s, Gorbachev rejected this to Egon Krenz, citing precisely that constitutional mandate: The abolition of the death penalty could be understood as follows: as if the GDR were weakening in its anti-fascist stance.

In addition, such a step would not be necessary as long as the death penalty was still being carried out in the USA and many other countries.

However, after the GDR had not pronounced or carried out death sentences for some time, it was officially abolished in 1987.

The contrast in the administration of justice in the two German states is clearly evident in the provisions of the GDR constitution and the Basic Law.

In the Federal Republic, judgments have been and are being announced "in the name of the people". Where do judges get this right from? In other countries people are more honest. Judgments are made there

Name of the ruling monarch or the administration that gave the judges the authority to do so. The judgments were and are still being made in the (West) German democracy

"in the name of the people". Did it legitimize "the people"? The judges, civil servants in terms of social status and social position, are appointed and promoted by authorities (if necessary for life).

The people have no influence on this. Judges were elected in the GDR.

Who is granted extraordinary power over the fate, especially over the freedom (also over the life) of people

decide requires special legitimation! In the constitution drawn up and previously discussed for an all-German democratic republic, which became the first constitution of the GDR in 1949, Article 121 stipulated that the judges of the Supreme Court - as well as the supreme public prosecutor of the republic - should be appointed by the government at the suggestion of the government People's Chamber were elected. This applied analogously in the states and, from 1952, in the districts.

This historic step towards the creation of a democratically based and legitimate administration of justice was followed by others. In Article 95

The GDR constitution of 1968 said:

"All judges, lay judges and members of the social courts are elected by the people's representatives or directly by the citizens."

In the GDR, the verdict "In the name of the people" was therefore justified and not a demagogic assertion.

The lay judges, who generally worked in all courts (for example in labor law, civil and family matters), also had equal rights in accordance with Article 96 Paragraph 2 of the GDR Constitution

"Judge" and not, as in criminal proceedings before Federal German courts, personnel who do so without knowledge of the files

sit next to the professional judges, listen in silence and are not involved in drafting the – relevant – written reasons for the verdict.

They don't sign them either. The lay judges in the GDR did this if they agreed to it.

The members of the social courts were like in the GDR

"Ordinary" judges work. The conflict commissions in the companies and the arbitration commissions in the residential areas and production cooperatives were part of the justice system. This is also where they differ from comparable ones

institutions in other socialist countries. They fulfilled judicial tasks in full. Their decisions (resolutions) could be challenged through legal means. If they became legally binding, they could be enforced.

The democratic character of the GDR's administration of justice was also reflected in other provisions of the constitution. The section

"Socialist administration of justice and legality" (Art. 86) begins with the fundamental statement: "The socialist society, the political power of the working people, its state and legal order are the

fundamental guarantee for the respect and implementation of the Constitution in the spirit of justice, equality, fraternity and humanity."

This is followed by Article 87, a provision that characterizes the democratic character of the administration of justice in a truly democratic state: "Society and the state guarantee legality by involving citizens and their communities in the administration of justice and in the social and state control over compliance of socialist law."

Making laws is one thing (in

In this respect, it is said, the Bundestag is the world champion). Many laws often have to be amended, corrected or replaced by new ones due to inadequacies. Legal certainty inevitably suffers as a result.

The other thing is to ensure compliance with the laws and enforce them consistently.

The aforementioned Article 87 of the GDR Constitution makes it clear how this should and can happen in a truly democratic state:

Compliance with the laws passed by the highest representative body in the interests of the citizens must become a matter for the citizens themselves.

If they independently comply with their laws and ensure that others comply with them, then compliance with the laws, and therefore legal certainty, becomes a matter of course. The reality of the GDR proved to a large extent that this works, which is why the objection that citizens only behave in accordance with the law when and where sanctions are threatened in the event of a violation is reasonable: in a bourgeois-capitalist society it may be true, in one democratic-socialist not.

And this compliance with the laws and thus legal certainty would be in

The GDR would have been even higher if a state with a fundamental negation of law and order had not existed on the doorstep in the West.

In addition to lay judges and social courts, collective representatives, social prosecutors and defense lawyers also took part in the proceedings before criminal courts.

Thousands of GDR citizens contributed to order and security in commissions, worked in youth welfare commissions, in occupational safety commissions, as part of the Workers' and Farmers' Inspections (ABI), as helpers of the People's Police... They took care of this in a variety of ways

Compliance with the law by everyone. This not only resulted in a high level of legal  
, but also a sense of responsibility in work collectives and households.

The public prosecutors of the GDR had comprehensive authority over everyone, including and not least over employees of the state organs, to monitor legality. In the GDR - there is no such thing in the Federal Republic of Germany - there was a law on the public prosecutor's office, in Chapter V of which ("Tasks, rights and obligations in the general legal supervision")

powers were regulated. The law corresponded to Articles 97 and 98 of the GDR constitution. The public prosecutor's office ensures "the security of the socialist social and state order and the rights of citizens," it said, and it monitors "strict adherence to socialist legality."

This provision also testified to a socialist constitutional state. Where was and is there something comparable in the Basic Law or in the legal system of the Federal Republic of Germany?

From a legal point of view, the public prosecutor's office - as an auxiliary body of the courts originally located at the courts - plays a role in the Federal Republic

subordinate role. Only in criminal cases does it have the function of initiating a trial and the task of representing the accused in court and/or - which has been common practice since the 1970s - of negotiating a deal between defendant, plaintiff and judge. To date, the legal system of the Federal Republic of Germany does not have a public prosecutor's office law.

In the GDR, the public prosecutor was the guardian of legality. For this purpose - in accordance with Article 97 of the Constitution - laws and legal regulations were given to him. Article 97 expressly stated: The public prosecutor's office protects citizens

Legal violations. The legal system of the Federal Republic of Germany does not recognize this; in it the public prosecutor's office is a largely powerless institution.

In the GDR, citizens turned to public prosecutors who were largely known to them in staff meetings, judicial discussions and consultation hours. They informed and responded to clear violations of citizens' rights. They stood by them. Often a call to the authority about which citizens had complained settled the matter without much fuss.

Art. 89 not only confirms the self-evident fact that laws and...

other legal provisions should not contradict the constitution. In the event that there are doubts about the constitutionality of legislation issued by the Council of Ministers or other state bodies, the Council of State should decide. The constitutional version of October 7, 1974 further stated: "The People's Chamber decides on doubts about the constitutionality of legal provisions."<sup>10</sup> This regulation corresponded to the essence of popular sovereignty. The parliament, as the legislature, was the highest state body of power.

The regulation in the Federal Republic of Germany's Basic Law, according to which an organ dependent on parliament - the Constitutional Court - has the final say on the compatibility of laws with the "constitution", i.e. the Basic Law, is undemocratic in that it disempowers parliament. In the practice of the BVerfG, the path often taken is to require the legislature to pass a (new) GG-compliant law within a deadline.

The basic idea that compliance with the law must become a matter for the entire people if there is legal certainty in the country and the appropriate administration of justice is practiced

should be, was reflected in Article 90 of the GDR constitution. »The administration of justice serves to implement socialist legality, to protect and develop the German Democratic Republic and its state and social order.

It protects freedom, peaceful life, rights and dignity of people.«

Paragraph 2 of this article was of particular importance; it was the concentrate of the consequences of our scientific knowledge about the nature and causes of crime. It read: »The fight against and prevention of criminal offenses and others

Violations of rights are a common concern of socialist society, its state and all citizens.«

Scientific criminological findings as well as people's everyday experience showed that crimes generally - and especially in everyday life in the GDR - did not occur suddenly. They were often preceded by social and personal, family problems. If fellow human beings observed these and reacted to them in an appropriate manner, violations of the law (violence, attacks, theft due to social need, etc.) could be countered early.

This is precisely why it was so important and so sensible for the conditions in the GDR that the prevention of rights violations was understood as a matter for society as a whole. The consequences of such efforts are documented. Since 1952, the number of crimes detected in the GDR has decreased, while it has increased in the Federal Republic of Germany. The crime rate in the Federal Republic of Germany, calculated as a percentage of the population, was around ten times as high as in the GDR. Citizens' participation in the administration of justice played a crucial role in preventing and preventing violations of rights,

which was expressly formulated in Article 90 paragraph 3.

Article 93 specified the functions of the Supreme Court in detail, so that it directed the jurisprudence of the courts on the basis of the Constitution, laws and other legal provisions in constitutional forms and ensured the uniform application of the law. As a lawyer, I cannot overestimate the importance of this constitutional provision - in view of the considerable, generally complained lack of



uniformity in the Federal Republic of Germany's jurisprudence. Because what can a legal system offer its citizens in terms of legal security?

if the laws are interpreted very differently? It was not without reason that Gustav Radbruch<sup>11</sup> emphasized the uniformity of jurisprudence as a valuable asset of the administration of justice.

The fact that the Supreme Court, with its judges elected by the People's Chamber, was not and should not be "a god above all" was made clear in paragraph 3 of Article 93 of the GDR Constitution. The Supreme Court was accountable to the People's Chamber and, between its sessions, to the State Council. This placed the Supreme Court's legal and political responsibility towards the People's Chamber and the State Council

does not constitute an interference with the judicial independence guaranteed by Article 96.

Article 94 Paragraph 1 of the GDR constitution described who could become a judge in the GDR and who could be elected as a judge: He had to be "loyal to the people and their socialist state" and "have a high level of knowledge and Life experience, human maturity and strength of character. This provision is based on Article 128 of the 1949 Constitution. When I met lawyers from other countries, I never got the impression that they saw themselves as opponents of their state

understood. In other countries too, judges were (and are) not only loyal, but also supportive of the state.

The article was supplemented by a provision, also based on the text of the GDR constitution of 1949, that "the democratic election of all judges, lay judges and members of the social courts ensures that justice is exercised by women and men of all classes and strata of the people «. In this sense, Article 95 stipulated the democratic election of "all judges, lay judges and members of the social courts by the

representatives of the people or directly by the citizens". They had to report to their constituents about their work.

This reporting was factually focused on the subjects of case law - i.e. legal questions, legal disputes and legal violations. The judges, lay judges and members of social courts, who were independent in their jurisprudence in accordance with Article 96, naturally had no accountability for their law-applying activity, that is, for the judgments they issued (together with the lay judges). Theirs if necessary

The review reported only took place in the usual forms of judicial review, such as appeal and cassation proceedings.

The purpose of this reporting under Article 95 was to make citizens aware of how the administration of justice operated and what results were achieved.

At the same time, it also served to prevent and prevent violations of rights in accordance with Article 90 of the Constitution and to strengthen democratic legal awareness.

The direct provisions of citizens' rights in Articles 99-102 were followed by fundamental provisions

on the right to make submissions (Articles 103 to 105). These were supported and specified by laws. Since the right to petition is not part of the administration of justice, it will not be discussed in detail here. However, I would like to remind you that citizens' submissions in the GDR were among the most important forms of public expression on personal and social concerns. They provided the political committees with important information about citizens' concerns and problems, provided a picture of the reality in the country, and named cases in which constitutional claims and constitutional reality

diverged. These clues opened up opportunities not only to register this, but also to react to it.

In comparison, Article 17 of the Basic Law grants everyone "the right, individually or in association with others, to address written requests or complaints to the responsible authorities or the people's representatives." The

Submissions called "petitions" – the name alone sounds more like a monarchy than a democracy – must be sent to the Petitions Committee of the Bundestag, which is responsible for processing them  
"responsible for requests and complaints"

(Art. 45 c GG). As a rule, the issue is not examined and remedies are offered, but rather it is checked whether the constitutional bodies involved acted in accordance with the law.

In the GDR, the sovereign, the people, had their say directly; in the FRG, "the legal process" must be taken.

Article 106 of the GDR constitution regulated state liability. It ensured that citizens were reliably compensated for damage to their personal property.

The Basic Law contains Article 34 with the misleading heading "Liability for breaches of official duties". This

Announcement turns out to be Eulenspiegel.

»If someone, in the exercise of a public office entrusted to him, violates his official duty towards a third party, the responsibility generally lies with the state or the corporation in whose service he works. In the event of intent or gross negligence, recourse remains reserved. The ordinary legal process must not be excluded for the claim for damages and for recourse."

In other words: There is no obligation to take recourse for political or other wrong decisions, and anyone who feels cheated or

If you have been lied to, you are welcome to complain.

But there are the process costs. In short, those of Walter in particular Ulbricht's constitution, which was approved by referendum in 1968, was a milestone in German legal history. It formed the basis for truly democratic administration of justice. The fact that it was ahead of reality in many points and that some legal derivations followed more the current political situation, i.e. the class struggle situation, than the intentions of the fathers of the constitution, does not take anything away from its democratic, socialist nature

Character.

Karl Polak (1905-1963), lawyer, received his doctorate in 1933 and immediately afterwards emigrated to the Soviet Union as a Jew. In 1946 he returned to the Soviet-occupied zone. He joined the SED and became head of the justice department at the party executive committee. He was one of the authors of the all-German constitution drawn up by the Constitutional Committee of the German People's Council, which was adopted as the GDR constitution in 1949. In 1949 he took up a professorship at Leipzig University and advised Walter Ulbricht on political and legal issues. He was one of the 20 members of the GDR State Council founded in 1960

In teaching practice, the relevant legal questions were treated as "Constitutional Law II"; later found the legal field "Administrative law" officially – again – takes its rightful place in the law presented by the Minister for

The university and technical college system confirmed the basic study plan "Jurisprudence".

See Erich Buchholz, Richard Hartmann, John Lekschas: Socialist Criminology, State Publishing House of the GDR, Berlin 1966  
In 1972, this option was abolished with the stroke of a pen: the parastatal companies became publicly owned through nationalization in return for compensation. Justice Minister Kurt Wunsch (LDPD), who succeeded Hilde Benjamin since 1967, responded by resigning. If the expropriated people got their businesses back from the Treuhändanstalt after 1990, they had to pay back the compensation granted by the GDR. Quite a few of these companies went bankrupt because the trust mercilessly insisted on their payment demands.

The tasks of the Council of Ministers were determined in Article 78 of the GDR Constitution. He

"Organizes the political, economic, cultural and social as well as the defense tasks of the socialist state assigned to it on behalf of the People's Chamber."

Dr. Heinrich Hohmann (NDPD) was put in charge of a working group that included the Attorney General of the GDR, a senior judge from the Presidium of the Supreme Court of the GDR and other representatives of authorities involved in the administration of justice, as well as myself as a criminal law scholar. See.

Erich Buchholz: »Criminal law in the East. An outline of the history of criminal law in the GDR", Berlin 2008.

This fundamental constitutional statement was deliberately enshrined in Article 48 because

Article 48 of the Weimar Constitution contained the far-reaching powers of the Reich President, which ultimately opened the way to the appointment of Hitler as Reich Chancellor by Reich President von Hindenburg.

On the disregard of this prohibition of retroactivity in the unlawful prosecution of GDR citizens by the Federal German criminal justice system after 1990, see Erich Buchholz: "GDR criminal law under the federal eagle", Berlin 2011

This determination is therefore not just a mandate to the legislature like Article 26 of the Basic Law.

In my essay "The socialist constitutional state and the constitutional foundations of socialist legality and administration of justice in the GDR" in: State and Law, issue 6, 1989, p. 476, written together with Gerhard Schulze, we called for the

The provision should be supported by appropriate legal regulations, such as a right of initiative, examination procedures and other, essentially procedural regulations.

Gustav Radbruch (1878-1949), lawyer, member of the Reichstag (SPD) and Minister of Justice from 1921 to 1923. He taught in Heidelberg since 1926. On May 8, 1933, he was the first German professor to be dismissed from civil service by the Nazis. He continued his teaching career in Heidelberg in 1945 and in 1948 he was asked to work on the Constitutional Commission of the German People's Council.

Hans Voss

The GDR as

"socialist state of the German nation"

Hans Voß, born in 1931, born and grew up in Demmin, worked for the Demmin District Council after attending school, joined the diplomatic service of the GDR in 1953 and studied at the German Academy for Political and Legal Sciences "Walter Ulbricht". Until 1960, head of the department for German issues at the MfA.

From 1965 to 1970 head of the 6th European Department in the MfAA (FRG). In 1970 he was secretary of the working group for the German-German summit in Erfurt and Kassel.

Then (until 1977) ambassador of the GDR in Romania, then in Italy (until 1985), second accreditation for Malta. From 1986 to 1989, deputy head of the GDR delegation at the CSCE follow-up meeting in Vienna.

You are, if you will, one of the fathers of the 1968 constitution. How did it work back then?  
The Constitutional Commission, consisting

made up of around fifty people from various areas of social life, had brought in the expertise of around two dozen experts, including Prof. Poppe, Gerhart Eisler, Uwe-Jens Heuer, Kurt Wunsch, Karl-Heinz Schulmeister, Friedrich Dickel and me. We were about a dozen professionals, each working on a topic. The work consisted of three phases: the development of a draft, then the public discussion and finally the incorporation of changes, suggestions, additions, etc.  
Ulbricht gave the line as to what the constitution should look like?

Yes. He attached great importance to various aspects. Germany, German unity, nation, relationship with the Federal Republic should be expressed in a certain way. In his basic understanding, the two German states were of a temporary nature, which should also be made clear in the constitution. That's why the first sentence of Article 1 read: "The German Democratic Republic is a socialist state of the German nation." This was not universally approved, as we know.

What exactly was your task?

To formulate precisely those parts of German policy. Those were how I first came

later found out the critical points that caused heated discussions in the Politburo.

Why?

Ulbricht was obviously one of the few, perhaps even the only one, who believed in the continued existence of the German nation and who still believed in the possibility of achieving German unity.

How did the premises he wanted come across?

He invited us. Two or three times there were discussions with the "experts" in which he explained to us how he would like this and that and why. The

was the time when the superiors still spoke directly to the subordinates.

So there's no directive: "You have to...", but rather reasoned with arguments.

Yes.

Alone?

No, Gerhard Kegel<sup>12</sup> was at his side. Herbert Graf also, who was the secretary of the voting commission. It was clear that Ulbricht had prepared very intensively for these meetings.

The actual text, which we revised and edited after the popular debate, finally dealt with the actual text

Constitutional Commission, i.e. the representatives from the Politburo and the bloc parties. The result was a draft that was significantly different from the one we submitted. There were crucial passages, let's say, toned down.

Concrete?

The statement "The German Democratic Republic is a socialist state of the German nation" was eliminated. I knew that this deletion had taken place in the Politburo. But I didn't know whether this was done behind Ulbricht's back or with his consent. In any case, the sentence was missing. At the meeting of the

In the Commission with the experts, we had the opportunity to present our objections to this proposal. Everyone commented on the part for which they were responsible.

So I stood up and explained that I did not agree with the changes to the German policy passages and suggested sticking with the original text. There was protest. Ulbricht, who chaired the meeting, reassured: "Quiet, comrades, let's listen carefully to what Comrade Voß means."

I think Ulbricht saw this as an opportunity to once again take a clear position on the German question. »Do you have an exact text at hand?

Comrade Voss? Come forward and show me."

So I went to the presidium and put the paper on the table. He looked at it and said it seemed worth considering. We should therefore not decide now and should only take note of what has been suggested.

Ulbricht stayed with the original text?

Yes. The constitution finally adopted by referendum in 1968 contains these national elements. As is well known, they were only deleted in the 1974 version, after Ulbricht's death.

Sticking to this formula, which practically described German unity as a perspective, would have had consequences. I don't mean that Ulbricht was thinking about overcoming two-statehood under a socialist flag, but rather the membership of both states in different military alliances. Since they were hostile to each other, this meant leaving the Warsaw Treaty and NATO. Has this been discussed?

Among us experts, yes. A united, neutral Germany was a conceivable option. We did back then

talked about the possibility of a confederation more seriously than later portrayed.

But the balance of power in such a confederation was predictable; one only had to look at the map. In the East, social progress would have been reversed; there would have been a restoration of power and class relations that had been overcome, as happened brutally after 1990.

Ulbricht was for a socialist German nation. That is why it was explicitly stated in Article 8: "The German Democratic Republic and its citizens also strive for the

Overcoming the division of Germany imposed by imperialism on the German nation, the gradual rapprochement of the two German states until their unification on the basis of democracy and socialism

Wasn't that illusionary?

One may see it that way with today's knowledge. But I believe that every successful policy needs a vision and must pursue a long-term perspective. Ulbricht's idea did not suit the film, either for the major powers or for their allies in Bonn and Berlin. That's why he was disruptive and was dumped. The SPD also had 1958

presented a plan for Germany that the Americans didn't like - so it disappeared within a short time.

This means that all German-German attempts at rapprochement were suspected by both the Western and the Eastern leading powers. Nevertheless, the attitude was correct. Back then, I was able to directly observe Ulbricht's thoughts and his actions on the German question and I share Egon Bahr's view, which he recently articulated again in his book "Gaps in Memory": There were only two German statesmen of importance in the post-war period - Adenauer and Ulbricht.<sup>14</sup>

Months later you experienced Ulbricht again directly in the preparation of the meetings in Erfurt and Kassel.

I was head of the department responsible for the Federal Republic of the Foreign Ministry and was in Bonn on behalf of Ulbricht. I handed over the letter he had written to Federal President Heinemann. Michael Kohl and I had drafted the letter, but the initiative came from Ulbricht. He also wanted to talk to Heinemann, but we had to talk him out of it: the Federal President was not his or no platform for discussions or negotiations. Heinemann also reacted as expected: The

The answer went to Prime Minister Stoph.

So you drove to the Federal President's Office in Bonn and said: Hello, I'm Mr. Voß, I have mail from the Chairman of the State Council of the GDR for the Federal President. Or how should you imagine it?

I was notified and was already expected by Horst Ehmke and Dietrich Spangenberg. Until recently, Ehmke was State Secretary in the Federal Ministry of Justice, which Gustav Heinemann led in the grand coalition. Then he was Minister of Justice himself, as Heinemann

ran for office and became Federal President, and since then, in the social-liberal federal government under Willy Brandt, he has been Federal Minister for Special Tasks and Head of the Federal Chancellery. Spangenberg was head of the Berlin Senate Chancellery under Governing Mayor Willy Brandt, then Senator for Federal Affairs and now State Secretary in the Office of the Federal President.

Although the letter was not addressed to them, they opened the envelope in my presence and read it. Then the whole thing took its familiar course.

So let's say: The impetus for the German-German dialogue came from

Ulbricht.

That's the way it is. And the fact that Bonn reacted to this for the first time was progress. It strengthened Ulbricht's national position.

The two encounters in Erfurt and Kassel did not bring any tangible results, they split into one

"Pause for thought." Was it just because the international constellation wasn't ready yet?

Surely that was the reason. There was also no majority for this in the SED leadership; in my impression, Ulbricht was isolated on this issue.

Ulbricht wanted to bring movement into German-German relations,

the Politburo does not. They made their jokes: a break from thinking or a break from thinking, it was called, in order to downplay the company a little. Nothing came of it, there was nothing.

You were part of the GDR delegation in Erfurt and Kassel.

I was secretary of the delegation. – But I want to contradict that. Nothing came of it. Something important happened: for the first time in history, the two German heads of government negotiated with each other on equal terms! It was after two that something tangible would come of this first encounter

Decades of bitter hostility are not to be expected. But Erfurt and Kassel demonstrated to the whole world: The two states and their leaders want to talk to each other and can talk to each other. The thread of conversation was started and should never be broken again. Egon Bahr reads it like this: "The first meeting between the two German heads of government was news. But the pictures from Erfurt were more convincing. They showed, surprisingly for many in East and West, that if you let the Germans, they will want to unite."<sup>15</sup>

The apt one comes from your boss at the time, Otto Winzer

Commentary on Bahr's politics of change through rapprochement: He called it counter-revolution on felt slippers. Did he say it back then or only later?

Although I researched when and where Winzer is said to have said this myself, I still have to provide proof.

I didn't find a source. But Bahr once said: Whoever said that: they were right!

In any case, this quote comes from the time before Erfurt and Kassel. In my opinion, the word came up in connection with Brandt's government declaration in 1969. He had the GDR with his formulation of the two states in Germany

Forced to act.

To what extent were we aware that this rapprochement could have existential consequences for the GDR? The comment attributed to Winzer suggests that it was felt.

During this phase there was a heated discussion in the GDR leadership: be active or block? Ulbricht was for active, offensive action. The majority saw it differently and tried - ultimately successfully - to block it with Moscow's help. This controversy was not made public. But Ulbricht prevailed against everyone and declared: We are negotiating! And obviously behind

on the back of the Soviet leadership, because Bahr, who boasted of his exorbitant contacts with Moscow, learned there that East Berlin had proposed the meeting in Erfurt "without consulting Moscow"<sup>16</sup>. He retaliated for this information with the news that Brandt was already having the meeting prepared. And finally further: "Moscow received a report from Bonn via an encrypted dedicated line more quickly, more correctly and in more detail than from East Berlin about the course of events in Erfurt with the breaching of the barriers, which was not pleasant for the GDR."<sup>17</sup>

Bahr also fuels the suspicion of a set-up with the sentence: "Whatever you think about the GDR, if they want to close it off, they can do it." It was said that the "Willy Rufers" were ordered by people from the SED leadership, in order to show Moscow, in particular, that "the old man" no longer has the matter under control and that his western policy is on the slippery slope, which is why he has to leave.

I also heard about such speculations, but I have no evidence for them. On the eve of the meeting, I spoke with the first secretary of the SED district leadership, Alois Braut, and everyone to secure the

Those responsible for the station forecourt discussed the security situation in detail. Everything was clear then, everything seemed safe. Afterwards I have to say: everyone involved underestimated the crowds and didn't expect hundreds of Brandt fans. The pictures had long since been sent all over the world before the party students were brought to the square to cheer on our Willi. Did Ulbricht ever speak specifically about membership in military alliances in your presence?

No, although of course he always had that in mind because he saw himself as a politician who was responsible for everything

Germany perceived and acted in the interests of the entire German nation. In this point he differed significantly from Adenauer, who wanted half of Germany instead of half of Germany. At the end of his active political work, Ulbricht became aware that the class struggle situation had not developed as he had hoped. A socially just, democratic, socialist Germany as a whole was not possible under the existing circumstances - nationally and internationally. When he admitted it to himself, he resigned - that was shortly before he was deported.

How do you determine that? Have there been any comments from him? Or was it a feeling you had?

A feeling that arose from conversations. As ambassador, I repeatedly welcomed Horst Sindermann and Werner Lamberz to Romania, with whom I had a very good relationship. They also said they were ashamed to have pushed Ulbricht aside like that. Who did they blame?

Moscow.

Gerhard Kegel (1907-1989), KPD 1931, recruited as a foreign correspondent in Warsaw in 1933 by the Soviet military reconnaissance GRU. From 1945 to 1949 editor-in-chief

the Berliner Zeitung, then deputy editor-in-chief of Neue Deutschland. Foreign policy advisor to Walter Ulbricht from 1955 to 1972. In 1959 he took part as an envoy at the Geneva Conference of Foreign Ministers of the Great Powers. 1967 to 1971 candidate for the Central Committee of the SED, from 1973 to 1976 ambassador and head of the permanent representation of the GDR to the UN in Geneva.

What this was meant is explained in Volume 1 "Constitution of the German Democratic Republic" published by the Staatsverlag in 1969.

Documents. Commentary", edited by Klaus Sorgeicht, Wolfgang Weichelt, Tord Riemann and Hans-Joachim Semler. In the commentary on Article 1 of the Constitution and the wording

"Socialist state of the German nation" it says: "It is therefore constitutionally anchored that the revolutionary struggle of the Germans, which has lasted over a century

working class has led to victory against the imperialist German big bourgeoisie and the Junkers allied with it in the GDR and a part of the nation, freed from the oppression and exploitation by capital, is already successfully treading the path to the future of the

entire German nation. Under the leadership of its Marxist-Leninist party, the working class, together with its allies on the soil of the German Democratic Republic, eradicated the roots of Nazism and imperialism after the defeat of Hitler's fascism and created its own state power. Since the individual comments are not marked by name, All people from the listed author collective must be listed: Reiner Arlt, Herbert Edeling, Gerd Egler, Dieter Heinze, Klaus Heuer, Uwe-Jens Heuer, Gerhard Kegel, Helmut Koziol,ek,

Walter Krutzsch, Frithjof Kunz, Lothar Oppermann, Eberhard Poppe, Tord Riemann, Heinz Schmidt, Gerhard Schüßler, Hans-Joachim Semler, Klaus Sorgeicht, Hans Voß and Wolfgang Weichelt.

In the book »You have to tell that« published by Egon Bahr in 2013. Memories of Willy Brandt" it says literally: "I became increasingly aware that he (meaning Adenauer - the editor) and Walter Ulbricht were congenial. Each of the two wanted to secure their part of the country and increase their weight in the respective camp, whether east or west.

And each one turned out to be the strongest personality in his state, dominating the political scene.

Egon Bahr: You have to tell me that. Memories of Willy Brandt, Berlin 2013, p. 91

ibid

ibid

Kurt Wishes

From Hohenschönhausen prisoner to Justice Minister of the GDR

Kurt Wunsch, born in 1929, joined the LDPD in 1945 and held positions in the Saxony regional association and on the party executive committee from 1951 to 1954. Briefly imprisoned as an "agent" in connection with June 17, 1953.

Distance learning at the German Academy for Political Science and Law in Potsdam and doctorate (together with Manfred

Gerlach) to Dr. jur. 1964. Since 1965 Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers, since 1967 - succeeding Hilde Benjamin - Minister of Justice. Resigned in 1972 due to the nationalization of private and semi-public companies.

Teaching position as a professor of judicial constitutional law at the Humboldt University in Berlin. From the January 13 to August 16, 1990, again GDR Minister of Justice in the cabinet of Hans Modrow and Lothar de Maizière.

When I was asked whether I wanted to contribute to this book, I wasn't sure what I was asking for

had let me in. My first manuscript seemed to me to be a failure (unfortunately only towards the end of its preparation) due to too frequent repetition of well-known facts and data from the life and political work of Walter Ulbricht. In addition to your own memories, there are countless – often contradictory – biographies and ratings available in books and on the Internet.

A book whose title I would not have expected was particularly impressive for me.<sup>1</sup> In his brief foreword, editor Frank Schumann formulated what had previously been unusual, due to the content of the book

Book but clearly proven theses. There he refers to Walter Ulbricht as

"Reformers and modernizers"<sup>2</sup>. And I refer to a very interesting essay by the clever and well-known German-British historian and publicist Sebastian Haffner from 1966, which deals with the question of how "Ulbricht in particular was able to become the most successful German politician after Bismarck and alongside Adenauer."<sup>3</sup>

Walter Ulbricht, who was wanted as a leading communist and member of the Reichstag after the handover of power to the fascists, was able to escape after six months

He escaped arrest in the underground by fleeing to Paris and later to Prague, where he worked for the KPD's respective foreign organizations. In 1938 he moved his exile to Moscow and became a representative of the Central Committee of the KPD at the Executive Committee of the Communist International (EKKI). He was one of the initiators of the National Committee "Free Germany" (NKFD) and played a key role in recruiting generals, officers and soldiers who had been taken prisoner by the Soviets to participate in the democratic development after the victory over fascism.

After Walter Ulbricht's return to the Soviet occupation zone in Germany, he was primarily concerned with the reconstruction of the KPD, which was founded on June 11, 1945. Shortly afterwards, under the leadership of Otto Grotewohl, the SPD was re-founded and the new ones were founded

Christian Democratic Union and the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany (LDPD), which I joined at the age of 16.

On July 14, 1945, these four parties - while maintaining their independence - formed the bloc of anti-fascist democratic parties

in the Soviet occupation zone. This was the starting point for a successful, if not always unproblematic, collaboration that lasted more than four decades.

This bloc was joined by the National Democratic Party (NDPD), formed in 1948, and the Democratic Peasants' Party (DBD). There were also mass organizations such as the FDGB and the FDJ.

State elections took place in 1946. In the Soviet-occupied zone, the SED, now formed from the KPD and SPD, as well as the LDPD and CDU, took part. In all five countries, the SED emerged as the strongest party by far

elections. In the state of Saxony-Anhalt, however, the LDPD and CDU had more seats than the SED, so that the Liberals in the person of Dr. Erhard Hübner appointed the Prime Minister. In the other countries, the prime ministers belonged to the SED, depending on the majority. According to the bloc principle, the LDPD and CDU each appointed several specialist ministers. As is well known, the transformation of the Western powers' occupation zones into the separate state of the Federal Republic of Germany forced corresponding reactions in 1949 in the form of the transformation of the Soviet zones

Occupation zone in the GDR.

Walter Ulbricht was elected as a member of the Central Secretariat - de facto deputy chairman of the SED - in connection with the unification of the KPD and SPD and played a significant role in the initiative for the founding and development of the People's Congress Movement for Unity and Just Peace by resolution of November 26, 1947. The 1st People's Congress took place as a German political forum on the 6th and December 7, 1947 with around 2,000 delegates from East and West, although the Western occupying powers mobilized for

had banned the People's Congress in their zones.

The 2nd German People's Congress took place on 17/18. March 1948, not coincidentally 100 years after the beginning of a bourgeois revolution in Germany. The congress again brought together around 2,000 delegates, including 500 West Germans. The congress decided to hold a referendum for German unity in all occupied zones in protest against the possible establishment of a state in the western zones. The referendum, which took place with great participation from May 23rd to June 13th, 1948 in the Soviet Union

Occupation zone was not approved in the western zones. In addition, a German People's Council was formed, which was primarily tasked with drawing up a draft for an all-German constitution.

The 3rd German People's Congress took place on

29/30 May 1949 in Berlin, after 60 percent of the citizens eligible to vote in the SBZ approved the delegate nominations in a secret ballot on 15/16. May 1949 agreed. A total of 1,400 delegates came from the Soviet occupied zone and - despite all the hindrances - also 610 from the

Western zones. With one dissenting vote, the congress accepted the draft constitution - which was partly based on the Weimar Constitution - which the People's Council had drafted as instructed and elected the second German People's Council, which later on the same day was constituted as the Provisional People's Chamber with the GDR, which was newly founded on October 7th .4 At the 3rd People's Congress, the National Front of Democratic Germany (later the National Front of the GDR) was brought into being in the form of a popular movement expanded according to the bloc principle to include all mass organizations. On

The Manifesto of the National Front was presented at the 9th meeting of the German People's Council on October 7, 1949, the day it was reorganized into the Provisional People's Chamber of the GDR. In February 1950 the National Council of the National Front was constituted.

One of the most important tasks of the National Front and its committees at all levels was the preparation of elections to central and local representative bodies. This ranged from the introduction of candidates and nominations to the setting up of polling stations and public ones

Vote counting. The years of cooperation between the bloc parties and especially with the FDGB did not eliminate the differences between them and other social organizations, but a common socialist goal increasingly came to the fore

Of course, all of these and later, essentially progressive developments also had seemingly or actually negative consequences - at least for parts of the population.

At times I thought I was affected by it myself. I come from a very middle-class family. Father

was a corps student, a doctor of chemistry and a private entrepreneur and, along with my mother, was one of the founding members of the LDPD. I also joined the party six months after the end of the war.

In mid-1946 I joined the FDJ, which increasingly led me to the left-wing, social-liberal wing of the party. In 1948 I successfully passed my Abitur exams in Dresden and wanted to study chemistry like my father. I had to be told that as a commoner I should try again later; now the children of the workers and farmers have to study first. That's what they called it

Breaking educational privilege. I was upset, but moved - im

Difference to many other rejected university applicants - not to West Germany. There were too many alumni sitting in the chairs there for me.

Quite by chance, I was offered the vacant position of full-time managing director of a large Dresden district group of the LDPD. At that time the party had more than 10,000 members in Dresden. I obviously worked well, because a year later I was already head of department in the city district association, and again a year later in the same position

Saxony regional association, and in 1951, at the age of 22, I was appointed head of the main department for organization in the central party leadership in Berlin. (Probably also - like many others - benefited by the generation gap caused by the war).

At that time, Walter Ulbricht made a significant and effective effort to continue the policy of a close alliance of classes and strata within the framework of bloc politics and the National Front in the interests of the GDR. His new functions as General Secretary of the SED Central Committee and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers were very helpful.

He particularly encouraged the other parties to make contacts internationally - of course especially in other progressive countries - and to exchange experiences. The LDPD was already in the process of contacting parties in Poland and Czechoslovakia. However, Walter Ulbricht said that his recommendation also included other continents. He is thinking, for example, of the People's Republic of China, where there are private companies with state capital participation. We did some research and learned that there were eight other parties besides the Communist Party, including some that were similar to us. In the

Unlike the LDPD, these still exist.

The "Society for the Democratic Development of China" practices the model of state participation in private companies very successfully to this day. We established friendly relations with this party, exchanged delegations and took part in mutual party conferences. With the observations made there, we put forward proposals for state capital participation in private companies in the GDR, which would work for years with very good results. I will come to this in another context

Come back.

Here I would like to quote something from "Lotte and Walter" because it can hardly be put better: "At some point Ulbricht understood that neither the Soviet model could be transferred 1:1 to Germany, nor that the Soviet Union under Stalin was serious about it the 'world revolution'. Since the 1930s, the USSR thought of what the right of a great power was, mostly in terms of itself, and unconditionally self-preserving. When Walter Ulbricht on the 2nd When the party conference on July 9, 1952 proclaimed the building of the foundations of socialism, it was a coup, a coup from above, so to speak

Bismarckian format. Comrade General Secretary [...] blackmailed Moscow with the fact that a socialist ally could not be handed over to the class enemy. [...] In the so-called Stalin Note dated

On March 15, 1952, Moscow offered the Western powers to withdraw from Germany (and thus abandon the GDR) if the Federal Republic was not integrated into the Western bloc. A neutral Germany (as a buffer and part of a cordon sanitaire to the USSR) should be created through all-German elections."<sup>5</sup>

The starting point for the project construction

The basis of socialism was, of course, a corresponding increase in national income, but this basis did not grow but shrank because the western zones or the Federal Republic of Germany did not fulfill their reparation obligations to the Soviet Union, which had suffered by far the greatest war damage. When reparation payments were officially stopped in 1953, the Soviet zone/GDR had paid the Soviet Union 99.1 billion DM. In contrast, the western zones/FRG paid reparations to their occupying powers amounting to 2.1

Billion DM. This was also one of the reasons why the development of material living conditions in the East at least stagnated, especially since the Soviet leadership - with the end of reparation payments in mind - was particularly strong. There was also a demand for an increase

"Defense efforts" by Moscow, because a hot war had been raging in Korea for years and the Cold War in Europe was coming to a head, and rearmament was underway in the Federal Republic.

Under this pressure, the GDR leadership saw the only option was to raise labor standards in the country

state-owned businesses, increases in farmers' sales volumes and cuts in social benefits.

Private entrepreneurs, self-employed craftsmen and tradesmen had their ration cards withdrawn and were told that they should buy from the HO. Food was significantly more expensive there. These measures caused understandable resentment; calls for their withdrawal became louder and louder and could no longer be ignored. The leadership of the GDR reacted to this and withdrew many of the unpopular regulations on June 11th. The policy of the New Course was announced.

But before the course correction reached the bottom, and especially since the West - especially broadcasting in the American sector (Rias) - declared the social tensions to be political and purposefully fomented them, many took to the streets. On June 16, 1953, large demonstrations of production workers formed to demand the immediate withdrawal of the increases in standards. Around 10,000 working people finally gathered in front of the government headquarters in the "House of Ministries" on Leipziger Strasse in Berlin. They were told that the government was also raising standards

took back again. This was welcomed, but individual speakers tried, with some success, to radicalize and incite the demonstrators by calling for the government to resign and new elections.

Nevertheless, it remained peaceful. That changed the next day, June 17th. In Berlin and other major cities in the GDR, where acts of violence occurred, the Soviet occupying forces declared a state of emergency and allowed the tanks to roll in.

In subsequent proceedings against rioters, it became clear that Western services were significantly involved in the events. Egon Bahr,



at the time at the Rias, admitted involvement in the events in the GDR: »The Rias had, without wanting to (? – KW), become the catalyst for the uprising. Without him the uprising would not have happened as it did.«<sup>6</sup>

At the beginning of December 1953, I was woken up in my Berlin quarters on Schönhauser Allee around midnight by three gentlemen. They showed me their papers identifying themselves as employees of the State Secretariat for State Security. They asked me to

to accompany you "to clarify a matter". It is very urgent. At the end of the trip I found myself in one

spartan cell in Hohenschönhausen. Today this wing is called the memorial

"U-Boat," perhaps that was what it was called in the submarine detention center at the time.

I was interrogated 46 times within a quarter of a year. I couldn't give a substantive answer to the eternal question about my "enemy activity." I wasn't aware of the slightest guilt.

I admit: When I heard Christmas bells through the cellar hatch, saw a metal bowl with lukewarm malt coffee and two slices of bread with margarine on the cot next to me, and thought of the family

(who, I later learned, knew nothing of my whereabouts), I became sentimental and almost made to confess what they wanted to hear from me - in the illusionary expectation that I would then be able to go home. But there was nothing worse than such "food for thought," as fellow prisoners confirm. I state this expressly here because the head of the "memorial" spreads horror stories about torture in the submarine with an almost morbid imagination. I sat there for three months and therefore I know better.

My complaints and protestations of innocence were

Finally taken seriously and the "criminal witnesses" were thoroughly questioned again. As later became clear during a comparison, the informers were the head of the LDPD's central financial and asset management, district secretaries from Halle and Magdeburg and a district secretary from the Klötze district, that is, without exception, full-time officials of the LDPD. They were agents of the "Eastern Office of the FDP" and Mr. Hildebrandt's KgU and were tasked with incriminating me, as their boss, in the event of an arrest, with different people, not with each other

comparable time and place information. In this way, people in the bloc parties who did not fit in politically with the West were to be eliminated.

As I later found out in a conversation with Walter Ulbricht, my fatherly friend Johannes Dieckmann, President of the People's Chamber, had turned to him very concerned during my imprisonment and asked for information about my whereabouts on behalf of my relatives. During the review of the procedure initiated by Ulbricht, various deficiencies were discovered, the correction of which soon led to my release from prison. I received

2,000 marks in prison compensation and a three-week recovery stay in Oberhof with my wife.

Soon afterwards, Manfred Gerlach was appointed general secretary of the party and a secretariat of the central board was formed, which included Gerlach and four secretaries, including me.

After the death of President Pieck in 1960 and Gerlach's appointment as deputy chairman of the newly formed State Council, I took on the role of deputy general secretary of the LDPD. I was no longer interested in studying chemistry. Also the ones I just mentioned

The depressing experiences suggested to me that I should study law at the Academy of Political and Legal Sciences, where I later received my doctorate and habilitation. I was also elected as a member of the People's Chamber in 1954, where I served until 1976. First I was a member of the Youth Committee, later the Justice Committee and the Constitutional and Legal Committee.

The border security measures on

August 13, 1961 had brought about a consolidation of the political and economic situation in the GDR, but this was not initially satisfactory. On the VI.

At the SED party conference in January 1963, Walter Ulbricht initiated a reorientation of economic policy according to the "principle of the highest economic benefit" and "material interest". On the 24th/25th In June 1963, an economic conference convened jointly by the Central Committee of the SED and the Council of Ministers adopted the guidelines for the new economic system for planning and managing the national economy (NÖSPL). It was passed on July 15th by the State Council of the GDR as a guideline for future economic policy. The NÖSPL was in fact a state program to reform the

Planned economy. It was aimed at increasing the independence of companies - including in the use of profits generated - as well as limiting and specifying the plan indicators and increasing control through interest, premiums, levies and prices. The "material levers" to increase individual performance (e.g. bonuses, vacation places) should be developed. After all, labor productivity rose by seven percent in 1964.

If I remember correctly, Walter Ulbricht was invited to Egypt by President Nasser in 1965 and given all the honors of a head of state

received without normal intergovernmental relations between the two states already existing or intended to be immediately established.

From 1965 to 1972 I was deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers for the LDPD chairman Dr. Suhrbier active. In 1967 I was also appointed Minister of Justice.

In a lengthy personal conversation during our vacation in Dierhagen, Ulbricht and I also discussed the question of how we could achieve full diplomatic representation despite the Hallstein Doctrine and Bonn's claim to exclusive representation

could establish relations with other states. This involved, among other things, the offer to conclude legal assistance contracts. Ulbricht proved to be a clever strategist.

On the one hand, such treaties, whose implementation required comparatively little effort, usually had to be ratified by the highest representative bodies of the states involved because they were state treaties. However, this ratification was an act that brought about or confirmed the mutual state recognition of the partners.

With this in mind and in constant contact with the Chairman of the State Council

In 1969/70, together with specialists from my ministry, I conducted contract negotiations with Middle Eastern states and with the heads of state Al Bakr (Iraq), Nasser (VAR) and Atassi

(Syria) Agreement reached on the above-mentioned treaties and their consequences.

Walter Ulbricht had a keen interest in the content, form and effect of legal regulations. This was particularly evident in constitutional, state and administrative law issues. He had already played a significant role in drafting the GDR constitution of 1949, which had strong echoes of the Weimar bourgeois-democratic

Constitution, but on the other hand avoided the regulations and loopholes that had actually facilitated the establishment of the fascist dictatorship.

He devoted a lot of energy and time - when the level of development of socialist society made it possible and required - to drawing up the draft of a new constitution. Ulbricht made a statement to the People's Chamber on December 1, 1967, in which he explained in detail the need for a new constitution. Parliament unanimously decided to form and compose a commission of the People's Chamber to develop a

socialist constitution of the GDR chaired by Walter Ulbricht, which included representatives of all parties and organizations represented in the People's Chamber. Experts, including myself, were appointed to support the Commission.

The draft presented by the Commission was discussed for several months in a broad popular debate, in which a total of 12,454 suggestions were made - of course many of the same content - which led to 118 changes to the draft (in the preamble and 55 articles).

The referendum took place on April 6, 1968. Of 12,208,986

11,536,803 voters - 94.49 percent - approved the constitution of the GDR.

In his justification for a new GDR constitution, Walter Ulbricht expressly acknowledged the contribution that private entrepreneurs, craftsmen and other tradespeople made to socialist construction. These social classes as well as intellectuals of bourgeois or lower middle class origins were in no way a hindrance to further socialist construction. Apparently Brezhnev and his spiritual brothers in the Soviet leadership could not understand or approve of this either

such as the continued existence of private and semi-public companies or the entire NÖSPL. In addition, the impatience of the more or less designated successors to Ulbricht, who was already approaching 80, could not be overlooked. If only they had at least refrained from sending a seven-page incendiary letter to Moscow asking that Walter Ulbricht be removed from political circles, so to speak, and had taken matters into their own hands. Shortly after Ulbricht's replacement, the campaign to transfer companies with state participation and private companies into public ownership began. I

pointed out to the Council of Ministers that two conditions had to be secured: voluntariness and clear legal foundations. I further criticized the competition between SED district leaders to complete the transfer as quickly as possible. I repeated this emphatically on the XI. LDPD party conference and added that disruptions in the production of companies supplying the population must be avoided at all costs.

All of this was ignored and forced unprofitable special departments to be set up in combines for the production of consumer goods. The

State Council Chairman Stoph and party leader Honecker called on my party chairman Gerlach to "remove the bourgeois element from the Council of Ministers and its Presidium," which meant me.

Prime Minister Horst Sindermann commented to Manfred Gerlach: "When Wunsch opens his mouth and usually represents very sensible points of view, Willi (Stoph) immediately lowers the blinds."7

Under these circumstances, I have resigned - of course for health and personal reasons - as minister and as deputy minister

Party leader. I asked for an ambassadorship, which was strictly refused. So I applied for a professorship in judicial constitutional law at the Law Section of the Humboldt University and received it in 1972.

At the beginning of January 1990 I became Minister of Justice again, but because I did not agree to the "unification agreement" I resigned - this time actually at my own request - on August 15, 1990.

Then I got to mine

At the age of 70, I worked in a law firm made up of employees of the GDR Ministry of Justice who I knew. I'm out of the LDPD because of the worst things

Conditions of impending incorporation into the FDP in July 1990.

Lotte and Walter. The Ulbrichts in self-testimonies, letters and documents, Berlin 2003. On amazon.de, a Francius Palladio commented: "Ignoring political correctness, Frank Schumann has published an important book about an important German politician couple. A good book, a real gem and another successful attempt to counter Western historical falsification and agitation with facts and differentiated analyses. Lotte and Walter Ulbricht and their life's work should be fondly remembered by our posterity.«

loc. cit., p. 10

loc. cit., p. 11ff., see also: Der Spiegel 20/1971 or [http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-](http://www.spiegel.de/spiegel/print/d-43176368.html)

43176368.html

see "History of the German workers' movement", Berlin 1966, Vol. 6, p. 240ff.

Lotte and Walter ..., op. cit., p. 8f. 6

[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aufstand\\_des\\_17.\\_](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Aufstand_des_17._)

7 Manfred Gerlach: Jointly responsible. As a liberal in the SED state, Berlin 1991, p. 132ff.

emancipation

Inge Lange

When it comes to women's politics, says Ulbricht, it's not the accountants who are allowed to speak

Inge Lange, born in 1927, born and raised in Leipzig, trained seamstress, joined the KPD in 1945, active in various FDJ functions until 1961, candidate in 1963, member of the SED Central Committee in 1965 (until 1989), from 1963 to 1989

Member of the People's Chamber, candidate for the Politburo in 1973 (until 1989) and responsible as Central Committee Secretary

Women's issues. 1990 Exclusion from the SED-PDS.

In 1961 my political work in the Free German Youth, which I loved very much and which gave me the happiness of having many good friends to this day, ended. All of a sudden - this happened often in the early years of the GDR - I ended up in a responsible position in the SED Central Committee: Chairwoman of the Women's Commission in the Politburo of the SED Central Committee. This was anything but a quiet post. The enforcement of women's rights and equality between women and men were high

Significance and were by no means marginal issues in the politics of the SED and the government of the GDR. My membership in the women's commission and my responsibility for the interests of girls and young women in the FDJ gave me an idea of this.

As a woman who, influenced by her parents' home, was politically active from a young age, I also had some experience of what it meant to rethink the role of women in society after centuries of patriarchy, even under socialist conditions cause. It wasn't just old ways of thinking that applied

to break down men's behavior. Strengthening women's self-confidence wasn't easy either.

I well remembered the circumstances of my departure from the position of first secretary of the FDJ regional management in the SDAG Wismut in 1950. Then the "Buschfunk" reported to me the opinion of senior representatives of the company's administration - including and especially the Soviet one - How could it be that the regional organization of the FDJ, which consisted almost exclusively of male members, was led by a woman of all people.

So I was already equipped with some warning signals when Walter Ulbricht invited me to a detailed conversation in the early 1960s.

"You're going to have to fight a lot," were his first words, and he smiled and recommended that I get a jacket with reinforced elbows.

»Women's work is a difficult area, I know a bit about it.«

Then he told me about his childhood and youth. "Whenever my mother began to iron the large mountain of laundry, she called to me: 'Walter, get the book and read it to me!' What was meant was August Bebel's work 'Woman and Socialism'."

Walter obviously wanted to make it clear to me that he himself knew this - one could say - textbook for the women's policy of a socialist party well. On the other hand, he pointed me to the theoretical guidelines for my new task.

The very fact that he took the time to instruct me in the new task indicated the high priority that he personally attached to women's politics. In fact, over the years we worked together, I was able to get to know and appreciate his expertise. Not in the form of petty talk. That rarely happened. More in understanding

Support my concerns for the advancement of women in their entirety. In his wife Lotte he didn't have a bad advisor.

The first half of my new job saw the development of the Politburo's communiqué "Women - Peace and Socialism", published on January 23rd.

December 1961. Communiqués, i.e. statements from the party leadership, were guidelines for areas of social policy that were considered particularly important by the party at a given time. They had no force of law or regulation, but they were well thought out and long

discussed, forward-looking instructions for action. As a rule, because they were convincing and reasonable, they were welcomed and supported by the majority. They were an important instrument with which the SED lived up to its leading role enshrined in the GDR constitution, and that is how the communiqués were perceived.

Their realization was more difficult. This required a lot of persuasion, perseverance, stamina and realistic ideas in order to incorporate women's concerns into various laws and regulations.

Although in the constitution of the GDR

enshrined equal rights for women and, with the "Law on the Protection of Mothers and Children and the Rights of Women" of September 27, 1950 (repealed with the Unification Treaty of August 31, 1990), the fundamental prerequisites for the development of women's abilities and talents were created Walter Ulbricht considered it necessary to emphasize this social task with a very special resolution.

It is in the nature of things that such a document has many mothers and fathers, but I can say from my own experience that

Women's communiqué bore Ulbricht's signature to a very high degree. He was also the inspiration for this guide for women's policy in the GDR.

The designs went back and forth for a long time. More than once I received them back with handwritten side notes from Walter. It was clear to me from the outset that a priority task of the Women's Commission would be to give the demands of the communiqué legal force, which is what happened. Listing them all would take pages. Many demands were reflected in the GDR labor code alone.

In order to make Walter Ulbricht's intentions in women's policy clear, I cannot avoid taking a closer look at some aspects of the women's communiqué. From a historical point of view, it is interesting: the main concern of the communiqué, that "women will be given greater prominence than before in the building of socialism and that their living conditions will be improved," was embedded in the major political goals of the post-war period:

»Achieving this task requires, above all, eliminating the remnants of the Cold War through the conclusion of a peace treaty and the solution of the West Berlin question

eliminate."<sup>1</sup>

The fact that the second one was achieved ten years later with compromises, but the peace treaty was never concluded, still has negative consequences for women in Germany today. The communiqué stated with full justification: "This new life for women in the German Democratic Republic is an example and role model for all of Germany," and it dared to say: "Then they (the West German women – IL) will become like women and girls in the GDR, citizens with equal rights, they will be freed from worrying about tomorrow."<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, social fears still determine the everyday lives of women in this country today (and again in East Germany). Ulbricht always put his finger in the wound and liked to openly express shortcomings and omissions (our exaggerated fear of the... We only learned about the "error discussion" later, which also collided with Lenin's view of the behavior of a new type of socialist party when it is in power). In the women's communiqué, after acknowledging what has been achieved, one finds, among other things, the harsh statement: "However, the Politburo is of the opinion that these great abilities and...

The achievements of women and girls are insufficiently used for their own development and social progress. The main reason for this is that for many - especially men, including senior party leaders - , state, business and trade union officials – the ongoing underestimation of the role of women in socialist society. It is a fact that a completely insufficient percentage of women and girls hold middle and managerial positions, although 68.4 percent of all able-bodied women aged 16 to 60 are employed. It also needs to be pointed out

that the number of young women and girls being trained for technical careers is declining. The Politburo of the SED Central Committee does not agree with this and calls on the party's members and candidates in particular to work to overcome this contradiction."<sup>3</sup>

I was also privileged to get to know another important feature of Ulbricht's leadership style. He didn't believe in general appeals. Whether it was about shortcomings and omissions or about orientation towards new tasks, he always wanted his horse and rider to be named. That's why we were...

The women's communiqué clearly states the addressees of the mandate to achieve great progress in the shortest possible time in questions of the promotion of women and their equality in society: "From the comrades in the Council of Ministers and its organs, in the management of the State Planning Commission and the Economic Council, in the The Politburo expects measures to be determined in the ministries of public education, transport, trade and supply, in the State Secretariat for higher and technical education, in the management of the VVB, the local state bodies and the factory management

that will lead to an increase in the proportion of women in middle and managerial positions.«

And in order not to leave this to chance, the women's advancement plans were given greater priority.

Every company management and every cooperative board was obliged to adopt plans for the advancement of women every year. In state-owned enterprises (VEB) and state institutions, they were part of the company collective agreement concluded annually between the company management and the workforce

became. The legally established negotiating partner for the workers was the company union management of the FDGB. Of course, there was also some formalism, because they were not drawn up with the necessary care everywhere, and the women did not make themselves strong enough in every company. Knowing this well, the communiqué made the high demand to develop women's advancement plans "on a scientific basis, that is, in accordance with our broad perspective." »The role of women is already important when planning vocational training and the training of university and technical school cadres

"More attention should be paid to socialist society and its development in technical and scientific areas."4

Of course, the promotion of women also had an economic policy component. During the war, many men remained who were not available as workers, and emigration and targeted poaching to the West left significant gaps. Nevertheless, this question was not at the forefront of the drafting of the women's communiqué.

I remember that, on the contrary, Walter Ulbricht repeatedly warned me: When it comes to women's policy, accountants should not be the first and last

have a word. He wanted to express that it was a high-profile social problem that politicians had to take the lead on. This also stemmed from his firm belief that the equality of women is an indispensable principle of Marxism-Leninism.

How it was meant in practice can be seen, among other things, in its unmistakable criticism of incorrect attitudes. »Instead of helping women and girls cope with their greater burden, they invent arguments to prove that the use of women in...

middle and managerial positions are not possible. In particular, it is claimed that women's work with a household and children is not economically 'profitable'. Men are more reliable and don't "fail" as often, yes, there is also the "argument" that women have less understanding of technical, organizational and economic problems than men. All of these and similar phenomena contradict the nature of our state. They hinder the development of women and thus our entire society.

This was clearly about ideological barriers that had to be overcome.

Often they were not expressed openly, but hidden behind a lack of economic opportunities.

One of Ulbricht's passions was the focus on promoting women in companies and institutions. This was also logical because the level of employment for women in the GDR was very high. For singles and single parents it was a given anyway. For some women who are married or in a relationship, it was necessary to go to work because of the family's household budget

made necessary. Others used it to increase their family income in order to be able to afford more. But for the vast majority of women, professional activity was simply part of their self-realization. It made her economically independent from men. An unfulfilled wish of the women's movement in capitalist society.

The representation of women's interests in companies therefore played a prominent role. It was no coincidence that Ulbricht emphasized the responsibility of the women's committees founded in 1952 in companies, cooperatives and institutions. Its creation arose from a recommendation from the Politburo. "The

Membership in this committee is independent of membership in political and other organizations.«5

It is documented that Ulbricht himself took part in the discussion at a women's conference on the 4th anniversary of the women's committees in the Buna works in 1956.

For Ulbricht, women's policy and the promotion of women were never a means to an end.

It was always about women's self-realization, personal development, and equality. And that required improving their living conditions. We were always aware that

Working women with families had to do their "second shift" every day at home. What was of practical importance for them was the real measures taken to combat ideological barriers.

From the large package of gradually implemented measures that enabled or made it easier for women to balance work and family, the extensive program of daycare centers stood out. In 1989, places were available for 80 percent of children of daycare age and 95 percent of those of kindergarten age. The children were treated medically and

supervised by pedagogically trained staff. It was about more than that

"Storage" during parents' working hours. Here the mother and father's efforts to prepare their children for life were lovingly and expertly supported. In the larger Federal Republic, there is currently a lot of talk about the need to create conditions so that women can cope with work ("career") and family at the same time. There's certainly a lot of good intentions at play. The childcare allowance, however, is a laughing stock. When it comes to expanding the daycare network, you often hear that in the East

There are traditionally more daycare centers. If the GDR's socialist tradition in child care is what is meant, I can live with that. It must also be noted here that the extensive social policy measures with which Erich Honecker continued the course of improving women's living conditions were very much appreciated by them, even if a lack of funds led to a certain stagnation in the 1980s. Every year, International Women's Day was an important occasion for me to come into direct contact with Walter Ulbricht. Unlike today, often

According to the views expressed, we were not interested in one-off celebrations with men serving coffee. March 8th remained a day of struggle for us, as Clara Zetkin had initiated it in Copenhagen in 1910. There was a lot to do for women around the world so that they could not only become economically independent of men through work, but also be able to realize themselves as creative people.

Of course, we were not naïve and did notice that some leaders made it easy for themselves and used the Women's Day celebration as a fig leaf for the failure to promote women and their lack of understanding for them

problems used. This is also and precisely why the party and government call for International Women's Day every year. This regularly contained a critical assessment and a request to solve the current tasks. This made it more difficult for those responsible to let the issue of promoting women, which was unloved by some, fall into oblivion.

In keeping with the occasion, international solidarity with the women of the world was highlighted, especially with those who have suffered from war, persecution, brutal exploitation and economic backwardness.

Ulbricht always encouraged us to look beyond the national horizon. Solidarity was written in capital letters by the women of the GDR, and their internationalist help was highly valued all over the world. The Democratic Women's Association (DFD) was a well-respected member of the International Women's Federation (IDFF), which had its headquarters in the capital of the GDR. I am now looking ahead to events that occurred after Walter Ulbricht's death, but were unmistakably the result of the women's policy of the SED and the GDR that he founded.

The year 1975 was by the UN

was proclaimed International Women's Year, triggering a variety of activities in different countries. The World Organization of States and Peoples thus expressed that the position of women in the life of a specific society was in urgent need of change. This significantly strengthened the work of women's organizations. It can easily be described as a special appreciation of the DFD that the World Congress in the International Year of Women from October 20th to 24th, 1975 under the motto

»Equal rights – development –

Women" was carried out in Berlin. It was also Walter Ulbricht who did it

It became a tradition to invite several hundred of the most capable women from all districts and all areas of society to a festive gathering in Berlin on March 8th every year. This wasn't a show event. For the women who took part, it was a recognition of their achievements and they appreciated it. Above all, they were a wake-up call to further implement women's policy. In the head of state's speeches they were not flattered, but rather encouraged for their commitment

the enforcement of their rights.

A very difficult task that the women's commission had to work on was women's self-determination over their bodies. Personally, I had fond memories of visiting my grandmother in prison with my mother, who was in prison for several years. Why? In some cases, she had helped young women, especially working class women, avoid having to carry unwanted pregnancies to term. That was of course a criminal offense. At some point she was denounced and had to pay heavily for it. Young women in need had one less helper. Of course

This was not a solution to the problem, as many women died as a result of unprofessional help or suffered damage to their health.

We also worked on this problem in the GDR for a long time. It began under Ulbricht and was put into law when Erich Honecker was already First Secretary of the SED Central Committee.

The "Law Regulating Abortion" was passed by the People's Chamber of the GDR on March 9, 1972. For religious reasons, 14 members of the CDU parliamentary group decided against it, eight abstained from voting. For the first time in the

In legal history, a time limit was introduced for abortion. Doctors were required to provide information and advice, not only regarding abortion but also pregnancy prevention. Information and treatment were free.

But what was remarkable about this law was something else. The woman's decision to terminate the pregnancy within twelve weeks of fertilization was recognized as a woman's right. This is probably still a novelty in case law today. Only

In Denmark, a year later, a similar wording was included in the relevant legal regulations. Unfortunately, this law also fell victim to the Unification Treaty, even against the votes of Christian Democrats and Liberals in the last People's Chamber of the GDR.

Nevertheless, it must be said that it was able to have an impact on the jurisprudence of the Federal Republic of Germany within certain limits. Section 218 of the Criminal Code of the Federal Republic of Germany would not exist in its current version without the legal regulations in the GDR. So I can say with some satisfaction that at least in part

Women from the old Federal Republic were able to participate in an important experience of the GDR. A rare case, however. I wouldn't be telling the truth if I said that working with Walter Ulbricht was completely problem-free. What is crucial, however, is that his work also bore unmistakable fruit for the well-being of women. The more time passes, the more women socialized in the GDR feel what they have lost. I talk to many of them. Even those who do not hide critical comments about the GDR would like to see many of the achievements back, including life

of women easier and socially secure: full employment, equal pay for equal work, pension at 60, monthly household day, all-day schools, company kindergartens, children's holiday camps and much more.

"Women - peace and socialism", communiqué of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the SED, Neues Deutschland from December 23, 1961

ibid

ibid

ibid

Decision of the Politburo of the Central Committee of the SED dated January 8, 1952

Gisela Glende

Lotte was Walter's employee, but he was the boss

Gisela Glende, née Trautzsch, born in 1925, apprenticed as a commercial employee, 1945 KPD, from 1945 to 1948 worked in the SED district leadership in Marienberg, in the 1950s distance learning at the "Karl Marx" party college and graduated as a social scientist. From 1951 to 1968 deputy

Office manager and then, until 1986, head of the Politburo office of the SED Central Committee. From 1971 to 1986 member of the Central Committee, from 1986 to 1989 member of the Central Audit Commission of the SED.

You come from a communist family, your uncle Walter Trautzsch took part in the Hamburg uprising in 1923 and from 1933 was a courier for the KPD's foreign leadership, who maintained contact with the imprisoned party chairman via Rosa Thälmann.

Uncle Walter is what he never talked about, 1935 from one

The hospital was stormed, and my mother - father was already imprisoned - hid him at home in Lengefeld in the Erzgebirge. That is to say, I was raised to be secretive as a child... Uncle Walter fled across the border into Czechoslovakia and further into the Soviet Union, where he took part in the "Brussels Party Conference" in September 1935. The Nazis had already imprisoned him on March 3, 1933 as one of the first "protective prisoners."

Between 1936 and 1939 he commuted as a Thälmann courier between Paris, Prague, Berlin and Hamburg as "Edwin".

At times he entered Germany illegally every four to six weeks. The 19th time he was arrested while crossing the border in Aachen. In order to prevent the Gestapo from discovering that he was the courier between the Communist Party leadership and Thälmann, he accepted their offer to work as an informant in France.

He informed the party leadership in Paris about this immediately after his return. However, his detailed statement and other papers were lost during the war, which is why Walter never refuted allegations that he was a traitor and double agent

could. After review by the Central Party Control Commission, he was removed from the party apparatus in 1954. He then worked as an agricultural laborer and as an elevator operator and was disabled in 1959. In 1964 he received the Patriotic Order of Merit and thus his rehabilitation. Late, but not too late.

And one of your uncle's contacts in the KP's foreign leadership was Walter Ulbricht.

He didn't talk to me about that.

Who? Walter Ulbricht or your uncle

Walter?

Neither of them. But they made no exception. Most of those I met after 1945 who were in a concentration camp or a prison or in a Soviet camp remained silent about it. Rudi Thunig<sup>1</sup> was the first head of the office, then came Otto Schön<sup>2</sup>, whom I succeeded in this role: None of them ever said a word to me about the illegal work and the Nazi imprisonment.

Erich Honecker once told me that Walter Ulbricht and Wilhelm Pieck never spoke to him about the Moscow years.

When I started working in the secretariat office in 1951, suspicions were swirling through the party. This Noel Field affair<sup>3</sup> cast its shadow all the way to Berlin. That was probably one of the reasons: People kept quiet about the past so as not to incriminate themselves. You couldn't know whether this or that acquaintance might be your downfall.

But I also think that the twelve years of illegality forced her to only say the bare minimum, what was necessary for the work.

For some comrades this has shaped their lives, and they have this

Property never dropped again. But back to Walter Ulbricht. When did you first meet him?

On January 3, 1951. I reported to the Secretariat's office as instructed. But that was the birthday of Wilhelm Pieck, the party chairman, everything was in disarray and people assumed I was coming to congratulate him.

No, I said, I should work here. Then Rudi Thunig brought me in, who took me straight to Otto Schön, and he said we had to go to Walter Ulbricht first. Then I got a shock: What, the Secretary General? Ulbricht asked me a few questions, but then said mine

The documents aren't there yet, so I should go home first.

I would be informed. But then this rejection seemed a little harsh to him because he asked: Where are you actually from? I said: from the Chemitz area. Oh, he said, I think some comrades from Wismut will definitely be invited to the birthday party this evening in Niederschönhausen Castle. Otto Schön should drive there with you and ask if they still have room in the car.

So you were at President Wilhelm Pieck's birthday party at his residence in 1951?

Yes. There was someone sitting next to me at the table

asked me who I was. I'll work here, I said. To which he responded by saying that he was responsible for housing issues and that we would definitely see each other again. Of course that was the case. – Four weeks later I got the news.

The Politburo of the party executive committee had existed since 1949 and the Politburo of the SED Central Committee since 1950. In 1951 you became deputy head of the Politburo office. What tasks did you have?

In the secretariat, Edith Baumann<sup>4</sup> recorded the meetings; she was originally a secretary and now also a political secretary. You were the one

The opinion that both are not possible. So I took over their task: the technical preparation of the meetings, preparing the minutes and distributing them, and so on. Edith explained everything I had to do. I initially did not take part in the meetings of the secretariat itself. One of the secretaries then dictated the notes to me. But I soon started taking part in the meetings and taking notes myself.

What were the meetings like? Were Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht sitting in front?

No, the secretariat meetings took place in Walter's study

Ulbricht instead. He sat at his desk, and the secretaries sat on the left and right of the table in front of it: Franz Dahlem, Fred Oelßner, Otto Schön, Paul Verner, Edith Baumann, Paul Wandel, Willi Stoph... The secretariat met with him twice a week.

Politburo members did not take part in this?

Unless they were also secretaries of the Central Committee, no.

And where did the Politburo meet?

In Wilhelm Pieck's study. Pieck and Grotewohl sat there on the left and Ulbricht on the right. I wrote at a little table in the corner.

And who chaired the meetings?

Pick. And when he wasn't there, Grotewohl was in charge. Rarely Ulbricht. The Politburo met once a week. But as the structures of the GDR developed - Pieck was president, Grotewohl was prime minister, they had many responsibilities - Ulbricht took over more and more often. The meetings were then shorter. The secretariat meetings, on the other hand, usually lasted a long time. The meetings started at 4 p.m. First Ulbricht provided information about current issues, then the specified agenda items were dealt with, ie

there was discussion about it. I don't have to explain it to you, but for a better understanding of those born later, I would like to briefly say what the difference was: The secretariat was an operational working committee, the individual secretaries were responsible for certain areas. If I remember correctly, you were later responsible for youth, sports, state, law and security issues. The Politburo, on the other hand, was the collective political leadership center that dealt particularly with strategic issues. However, due to frequent personal unions, they inevitably disappeared from external perception

Boundaries between the Secretariat and the Politburo.

There are two forms of minutes in the archive - they are available as a rough version and as a fair copy. But there are no verbatim protocols. Why not?

Here too, the model of the CPSU was followed. Many fundamental statements that were important to Walter Ulbricht were formulated, recorded and also translated into Russian by the "General Department".

This text went to Karlshorst. At least in the 50s.

It is said that until 1955 Semyonov attended the meetings of the Politburo

took part.

Sometimes yes. Regularly but only at the meetings of the party executive committee.

Unfortunately there are no verbatim protocols. It is not known what conflict of opinion there was in the party's leadership committees, how it was discussed, who said what, why, how, and so on. This would have been extremely important for understanding the party's policies, especially for posterity. And besides, there would have been less room for speculation.



I didn't find it regrettable.  
Because it's less work for you

meant?

No. When I had to go to the public prosecutor's office for an interrogation for the first time after 1990 and saw all the files standing there, I thought: It's a good thing I didn't write everything down and they could now ask me about every detail. But you're right: the so-called processors, who have no idea about us and our history, interpret everything possible into these protocols, except what it really was like. Some people take the Politburo documents attached to the minutes as law, so to speak, without checking how the decision was made at the end, according to the

Discussion, looked like. Some proposals also failed and were not accepted.

I tried to explain it to the interrogators and immediately realized that they weren't interested at all. They only wanted incriminating things, nothing relieving.

You simply cannot imagine that there was heated discussion in the GDR's political leadership bodies.

They don't want to imagine it either. Because that doesn't fit into their image of the dictatorship. In her mind, only one person spoke and everyone else just nodded. That is not true. I have violent ones

Experienced discussions, tough arguments that left sparks flying. Wilhelm Pieck could get really loud. It's hard to believe because the public image was that of a fundamentally kind, fatherly man. Of course he was. But he could also get pretty heated in political debates.

It is said that Pieck was the balancer while Ulbricht sharpened things up.

Wilhelm could very well hit the table with his fist. He didn't let Walter take the sausage off his bread either.

What was the relationship between Pieck, Grotewohl and Ulbricht?

It was really friendly. They were closely connected not only politically but also personally.

Ulbricht, it is added, could be rude, especially to his employees.

This is nonsense. When I came, Lotte Kühn was his personal assistant.

People in the house even had more respect for her than for him. She was really strict and resolute in some things. He was more accessible, more open-hearted.

Ulbricht had a second personal employee with him, Gustel Zörnig, a very nice colleague

Jewish background who later left us. I don't know the reasons. And he also had a secretary, Anni Herbold, a Viennese woman who had come with him from Moscow. Nothing like that has been heard from them.

Do you still remember how the mood in the Politburo was after Stalin's death in 1953 and after the 20th century? Party conference in 1956?

After Stalin's death there was no big discussion. It was a fact that one was prepared for. No sign of deep dismay or great sadness. It was different after the XXth century. Party conference. I had the impression that there was something

was disappointed. People had expected more: deeper analyses, more thorough investigations into social contexts. Khrushchev now attributed everything to Stalin and the personality cult, and that was that. The comrades who lived in Moscow in the 1930s and 1940s knew what had happened there. Mia Niederkirchner<sup>5</sup> worked in my department. She was expelled from Germany as a stateless person in the 1930s and went to Moscow. She only spoke in hints about what was happening in the Soviet Union back then. So it seemed to me that our comrades were more

had expected more than just the apportionment of blame to Stalin.

In 1953 there are said to have been arguments in the Politburo as to whether Walter should leave or remain in his position.

Hermann Matern and Erich Honecker, or so Erich told me, fought for Walter Ulbricht and prevailed. Have you noticed any of this?

I sat there in the anteroom and only heard fragments of words. If I remember correctly, Semyonov was also present at this meeting. Suddenly Fred Oelßner came to me and said, quickly get a typewriter. He had

a sheet with Russian writing. He dictated his translation to me. These were proposals from the CPSU. I heard that our delegation in Moscow had been told that building socialism had been a mistake. That was the Beria line, which was corrected again a few months later. I made as many carbon copies as possible. Fred then distributed them to the Politburo.

The text you typed was then in the leather-bound folder that Honecker gave to the Politburo members for information in February 1989. It just said: "Documents." This decision was at the top of the list

CPSU from June 1953. The Moscow leadership summoned Ulbricht, Grotewohl and Oelßner (Pieck could not attend because he was ill) on June 3rd and 4th to tell them what the German comrades had done wrong. It was suddenly forgotten that the Politburo of the Central Committee of the CPSU, still under Stalin's leadership, had confirmed the establishment of socialism in the GDR on July 8, 1952, which was then confirmed at the 2nd World War.

party conference in Berlin had been decided. The Moscow consultation on 3/4 June led to a violent reaction in the SED Politburo.

I have heard that. The meeting took place

It didn't take place in Wilhelm Pieck's room as usual, but down in the hall, and I sat in the anteroom again. This session was very long.

In 1953, Zaisser and Herrstadt<sup>6</sup> were removed from the Politburo. What kind of people did you think they were?

From my observation, they didn't have much influence. Walter Ulbricht has repeatedly defended Zaisser to third parties because of his services in the fight against the Nazis, or he said: He commanded the Red Ruhr Army during the Kapp Putsch in 1920 and was a military advisor to the Kuomintang in the late 1920s

Manchuria is a war horse. But Zaisser, I found, had an unpleasant, condescending manner. He always made you feel very small.

This feeling never occurred to Walter Ulbricht: you spoke to him on an equal level.

And Herrstadt? He was hardly known in the party. And when I talked to him, I thought there was a wall between us. That was an unbridgeable distance, perhaps also conceit, hints of arrogance, almost self-importance. I later experienced this more and more with Schirdewan; as former confidants told me, he had become very disadvantageous in the 1950s

changed.

Where were you on June 17, 1953?

We still work in the old house on Prenzlauer Allee. It was just renovated. And the company security was sitting at the entrance, not like the security comrades later on. But for us everything remained quiet, most of it took place on Potsdamer Platz, in front of the Ministry House. As a precaution, we pushed the cupboards in front of the glass doors at the entrance. However, nothing happened. Then the Soviet soldiers came.

Who were Ulbricht's most important employees in the Central Committee?

Wolfgang Berger, who was responsible for economic issues. A clever head. He enjoyed high authority in the house. And Richard Herber<sup>7</sup>, the long-time party secretary of the Central Committee apparatus.

You set the agenda for the Politburo with Walter Ulbricht?

Yes. He specified and then said: Talk to so-and-so, get this paper, well, all the technical and personnel preparations for the meeting.

Did he call you, were there set dates?

No, I usually called him and

asked if I could come. Then, as far as the Politburo meeting was concerned, he confirmed the agenda. And before the minutes of the previous meeting were read out in the Politburo, he of course also looked at them and confirmed them. He wasn't petty or even fussy. That also explains that the fair copy rarely deviates from the rough version, meaning that he essentially confirmed what I had recorded. And then there were the appendices to the decision minutes.

After Ulbricht became Chairman of the State Council in 1960, Erich Honecker took over the secretariat meetings. But the

He chaired Politburo meetings himself.

Yes. And quite focused and taut, even if he allowed discussions and in no way stopped them. Alfred Neumann and Kurt Hager were very happy to discuss things. The meeting started at 10 a.m. and lasted two or three hours. Rare that was interrupted to take a lunch break.

Did he let criticism bounce off him, was he resentful?

I didn't need to criticize him. He didn't hold grudges either.

In the document folder that I already mentioned there was also a paper by Günter Mittag about the

Ulbricht's economic mistake. He accused Ulbricht of initially supporting Dubcek and praising him for throwing out all the dogmatists from the Communist Party's Politburo. Can you remember anything like that?

I don't remember whether Ulbricht said something like that. But it was also understandable that he accompanied the reform efforts in Czechoslovakia initially with sympathy, but then with increasing criticism. The Soviet social model had to be reformed. We had the NÖS for this. The Czechoslovak comrades had

the "Manifesto of 2000 Words" but no proper concept and wanted to radically reshape everything, thereby losing political leadership. This got out of hand. The West took advantage of this to break the CSSR out of the alliance. Ulbricht has repeatedly discussed this with Dubcek. In order to secure the GDR's reform concept, he tried to influence him and urge him to be prudent. When all else failed, the leadership of European socialist states decided to take military action, in which the GDR did not take part. Walter Ulbricht achieved this in a conversation with Brezhnev.

What place in history would you give Ulbricht?

Walter Ulbricht accomplished something in a difficult time that hardly anyone else could have accomplished. In twenty years he shaped the smaller, weaker part of Germany into a state that was a historical step ahead of other societies in many areas. Of course, he didn't accomplish this alone, but millions of people were involved in this construction. But he was the strategist and the organizer, he was able to mobilize and inspire the party and through it the masses.

Of course he also made mistakes. Only those who do nothing cannot make mistakes.

Did Walter Ulbricht say goodbye to his employees, including you, when he had to leave in 1971?

No. He wasn't completely out of the world for us either. Afterwards I met him repeatedly in Dölln and other places. He also became a little unpleasant back then. He even teased Lotte sometimes. After his death, I continued to officially look after her.

Once she was with Erich Honecker and he asked me to come along. She didn't like that.

"Does Gisela have to be there?"

Then he said: "She has to know what you have." Then she swallowed noticeably.

Was what she wanted from him so private?

Oh wow. It was about what she perceived as a downgrade in terms of protocol, because she was now the widow of the Chairman of the State Council and no longer - what is that called today? – First Lady was.

You retired in 1986 and left the party apparatus. Did you also leave the party at some point?

No. I think they didn't want me after 1989. After

Nobody came to me about the renaming to the PDS.

But the police and the prosecutor came?

There was a house search in 1991. And I was summoned to witness testimony several times. As you know, I was also a witness in the trial against you. It was about the border, about the Politburo protocols and what I tried to make them understand, that there were also things that were not documented at all. For example, there were circulation templates with sensitive papers that were not logged. So, for example, if Helmut Schmidt wrote to Honecker,

then the Politburo members took note of the contents of the letter, but the letter was not recorded in the minutes. Or file notes from confidential conversations with Bonn ministers. The boss wrote on it

"Politburo circulation," the paper was read and quietly filed away. But those in court didn't understand that. You could be glad that it didn't make it into the minutes: Some of your politicians, who didn't care about Honecker and the GDR after 1990, would have been ashamed if what they said to Honecker back then had become public

had written flattering things. We spared them that.

Gisela, you were a good witness in my trial.

Why?

Because you told the truth despite tremendous pressure on yourself. You didn't allow yourself to be intimidated like some others who were afraid of being punished by the justice system. You were confident and brave.

I cried. When I feel great injustice, I feel helpless and start crying. This happened to me more often after 1990 than in the forty years before.

Rudolf Thunig (1899-1983), business apprentice, 1918 Spartakusbund, then KJVD and KPD, head of the party publishing house "Young Guard" from 1920 to 1922. Afterwards, until 1935, employee in the Western European office of the Communist Youth International.

Arrested in 1935 and sentenced to twelve years in prison, which he spent in the Brandenburg-Görden prison (1937-1939 and 1943-1945), in the concentration camp

Börgermoor (1939-1941) and in the Sonnenburg prison (1941-1943). From March 1949 he headed the office of the secretariat of the party executive and the central committee of the SED. From 1952 to 1975 he was deputy department head in the Politburo office.

Otto Schön (1905-1968), insurance and bank employee, then an official of the KJVD, the KPD and, since 1930, the Red Aid. From 1933 to 1936 Bautzen prison, then Sachsenburg concentration camp. Continued illegal after release

active. 1945 Secretary of the Leipzig district leadership of the KPD, from 1947 to 1952 2nd Secretary of the Saxony regional leadership of the SED, since 1950 Central Committee member, then, succeeding Rudi Thunig, head of the Politburo office and personal assistant to Walter Ulbricht.

Member of the People's Chamber from 1958 to 1968.

Noel Field (1904-1970), US diplomat, communist and employee of the Soviet intelligence service. As an anti-fascist, he supported emigrants in Switzerland and France. In 1949 he was arrested in Prague on charges of espionage and convicted in Hungary; his brother Hermann, his wife and their adopted daughter were also arrested. As a result, staged show trials took place in which well-known officials who had ever had anything to do with Field were sentenced to death, including Rudolf Slansky, General Secretary of the Communist Party, László Rajk, Hungary's Foreign Minister, Ludwig Freund,

Advisor to the Czechoslovak President and close friend Johannes R. Becher, and Otto Katz (ie André Simon), head of the press department of the Prague Foreign Ministry. Field was released from prison in 1955, partially rehabilitated and financially compensated. His arrested family members were also released and allowed to leave the country. He lived in Hungary until his death.

Edith Baumann (1909-1973), stenographer, member of the Reich Leadership of the Young Socialists in the 1920s, joined the SAPD in 1931, board member in March 1933, then in prison (until 1936). 1945 SPD, 1946 FDJ and until 1949 Deputy chairwoman of the youth association. From 1949 to 1953, member of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the SED, then until 1955, Secretary of the Berlin District Executive of the SED. Politburo candidate from 1958 to 1963. Edith Baumann was from 1947 to

Married to Erich Honecker in 1953, this union produced a daughter (Erika).

Mia Niederkirchner (1911-1982) was the younger sister of Käthe Niederkirchner, who jumped ship via Poland in 1943 and made her way to Berlin in order to organize the anti-fascist resistance there. She was tracked down by the Gestapo and ultimately imprisoned in the Ravensbrück concentration camp. She was shot there by the SS in September 1944. Mia Niederkirchner lived in the Hotel Lux in Moscow, where she met Karl Dienstbach, an emigrant from Frankfurt am Main. From this relationship came Käte (without h) Niederkirchner, who was born on January 30, 1944 in Chelyabinsk. Käte Niederkirchner was elected to the People's Chamber (FDJ parliamentary group) in 1967, where she was the youngest member of parliament and, since 1976, a pediatrician on the Committee for

Healthcare. After the elections on March 18, 1990, she became vice president of the People's Chamber for the PDS.

Wilhelm Zaisser (1893-1958) and Rudolf

Herrnstadt (1903-1966) tried to remove Ulbricht from his position around June 17, 1953 - with Beria's support. She was expelled from the Politburo and the Central Committee in July 1953 and from the SED in January 1954. Zaisser's wife Elisabeth, who had succeeded Paul Wandel as Minister for National Education since 1952, resigned. In 1993, Wilhelm Zaisser was rehabilitated by the PDS.

Herrnstadt was assigned a job in the Merseburg Central Archives.

Richard Herber (1911-1986), printer, 1929 SPD, 1931 KPD, illegal work. After being an American prisoner of war, he became a new teacher, attended the Karl Marx party college in 1948/49, then worked in the Central Committee

employed. From 1953 until his death, Ulbricht's personal employee, and from 1958 to 1968, first secretary of the party organization of the Central Committee and head of Ulbricht's office. ZK member since 1967.

Solveig Leo

"Hero of Labor" in the GDR, in the Federal Republic of Germany the Federal Cross of Merit

Solveig Leo, born in 1943, apprenticed as a farmer at VEG Ludwigshof in Thuringia, then from 1961 to 1964 attended the agricultural college in Weimar. LPG chairwoman in Banzkow since 1968, awarded as "Hero of Work" in 1969 (among others with Margot Honecker), from 1992 to 2009 mayor of Banzkow in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania. 2007 was

Banzkow in the state competition "Our village has a future – Our village should become more beautiful" winner. In the federal competition, in which 3,625 municipalities took part, Banzkow won one of the eight gold medals that Federal Agriculture Minister Horst Seehofer presented to Mayor Solveig Leo at the Green Week in Berlin. Solveig Leo has been a recipient of the State Order of Merit of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania since 2011 and the Federal Cross of Merit, which she was awarded in 2001.

I only had one as a child

Career desire – I wanted to be a farmer. My parents weren't too happy about it, but I didn't let it stop me. At the end of their studies at the technical school in Weimar, a small group of students from the last semester were sent from the Weimar factory to Markkleeberg to agra, on the one hand to explain the agricultural machinery manufacturer's exhibits and, on the other hand, to conduct customer research. We were proud that we were taken seriously by the visitors, but we also wore the white coats of the factory representatives with the company emblem.

The highlight of our three-week deployment was Walter Ulbricht's visit to our and other stands on the machine site. What was new back then was the presentation of complete machine systems, in our case technology from potato planting to processing in warehouses, including potato washing.

Walter Ulbricht came half an hour early from the presentation of another company. Everything went smoothly for us. Walter Ulbricht asked specifically, he was particularly interested in when the new developments presented would be introduced into agricultural practice

should be. After the inspection and the very lively discussion about the machines, he said goodbye. "Good, good, the Weimar factory did a good job."

Everyone was of course very relieved and proud, especially us students, even though our contribution to the development of these machines was zero.

This internship lasting several weeks at agra was to have consequences for me.

The chairman of the LPG "Clara Zetkin" from Banzkow in the Schwerin district appeared at our stand repeatedly. He was looking for young cadres for his cooperative and raved about the prospects that ours had

expected there. However, we already had our graduate contracts in our pockets, which provided for us to work in Thuringia. Nevertheless, two accepted his invitation. We looked around Banzkow for three days and were thrilled. We canceled our contracts in Thuringia and started in the north.

After a year I was a livestock brigadier, and in January 1968 the 160 members of the 1,000 hectare cooperative as its chairman. I was 24 years old at the time, married to Martin, mother of a child who was just a few months old, and a third-year distance learning student at the University of Rostock.

My predecessor had prepared the change very sensitively with the cooperative farmers; they supported me in every respect and lived up to the name "Clara Zetkin". I enjoyed learning a lot from the farmers' rich experiences.

The LPG developed successfully and I was able to represent it at the Xth German Farmers' Congress in Leipzig that same year. I reported on our work there. During a break, for the second time now, I met Walter Ulbricht, who was surrounded by a bunch of people and was discussing. He was accompanied by Willi

Stoph and Georg Ewald, the Minister of Agriculture. Standing next to me was Else Götze from LPG Görzig, who was already known nationwide. A few years ago, in the Köthen district, a multi-day conference on fully mechanized sugar beet cultivation took place, at which one and a half thousand practitioners, scientists and students found out about the status of mechanization. Eight different harvesting methods were demonstrated, with the RS 09 implement carrier being by far the most important machine. The tractor found similar uses in the GDR's agriculture

It is widespread that the track width, height and turning circle were taken into account when building stable buildings. My heart overflowed, I talked happily, and when Ulbricht left, I heard him say to his companions:

»A young farmer speaks confidently about building modern villages. Where did this exist ten years ago?" He was certainly right: development in the countryside had made enormous progress in the 1960s.

In 1969 the GDR turned 20. In addition to my professional activity, I was still an active FDJ member. The Central Council of the FDJ invited some young people on the occasion

Republic birthday in Berlin. We ended up in the Friedrichstadtpalast in the well-known television show with Hans-Georg Ponesky "With your heart in it". Agriculture Minister Georg Ewald sat in front of me with his wife. During the show, Ponesky came off the stage with a bouquet of flowers and handed it to me, saying it had been given for me. This was repeated two more times during the evening. Then everything dissolved. They played a film that had been shot in our village while I was away. And then I was also seen at work and with my family, we were

now four of us. Then the lights came on and Minister Ewald was handed a microphone and explained that it had been decided at the highest level to award me the title of "Hero of Labor". There was huge applause in the hall, but I only perceived everything subconsciously and the tears clouded my vision.

But then the question arose: What should I wear to the award ceremony in the State Council building? Well, an FDJ member is wearing his blue blouse, a black skirt and heels, which I was able to walk fairly safely in, as I was otherwise used to rubber boots. So prepared I entered

State Council building and was directed to the designated place for me. Lotte Ulbricht sat next to me. She immediately drew me into conversation; I felt the many stares on my back. Lotte looked at my white pumps, shook her head and said that they didn't match my skirt at all. They should have been black for this solemn occasion.

When I was called forward to receive my award from Walter Ulbricht and Gisela Höppner, I had the feeling that the entire room was staring at my feet.

My knees were weak as butter. A few weeks later a package arrived

by Lotte Ulbricht.

I was afraid that they were black heels, which I didn't really need in the country. There were two books with dedications from her. I could actually use that. I still own it today.

Cloister

Gert Wendelborn

The socialist GDR is also a Christian state

Gert Wendelborn, born in 1935, studied theology in Rostock from 1953 to 1958, joined the CDU in 1962, received his doctorate in 1964, and completed his habilitation in 1969.

University lecturer for ecumenical church history and applied theology from 1969 to 1977, then professor for ecumenics and new church history at the University of Rostock until 1992. Member of the People's Chamber from 1976 to 1990, member

the Christian Peace Conference (CFK) and the World Peace Council as well as Vice President of the Peace Council of the GDR.

The relationship between church and state was subject to some tension in the 1950s. The conflicts became particularly acute in 1952/53 and 1957/58. At the beginning of the decade it was primarily about the young community. I have been a member of it since I was ten years old. In my high school class, many students wore the ball cross, which gave the impression that there was a second youth organization in addition to the FDJ. Admittedly, in the

The young community was not exactly encouraged to understand how to build a qualitatively new society. On the other hand, the state-controlled campaign against the Young Community also provoked our resistance.

With the new course in June 1953, things eased a little, but now there was bitter debate about the relationship between confirmation and youth consecration, which had been promoted since 1954. The church considered the two to be incompatible. In 1957/58 atheist agitation increased considerably. That was the legitimate right of the ruling party,

but there was a danger that the possible common ground between Marxists and (progressive and loyal) Christians would be lost. Walter Ulbricht certainly felt this and was aware that Marxist religious and church policy also had to mature further if as many citizens as possible were to be won over to help shape socialist society and future conflicts could be avoided. In any case, in 1960 he was much further along in his thoughts on this matter than some of his comrades. Years later, I remember a dispute with a Marxist from the

The leadership of the Peace Council of the GDR, who instructed me as follows before a trip to the Federal Republic of Germany on which I wanted to promote peace and understanding: We represent opposite ideological positions, but we work together in a spirit of trust. I agreed in principle, but thought this formula was too simple. If there are spiritual differences between us and they are highlighted, then it is hardly possible work together "in trust". The comrade closed her face, so she understood me. Ulbricht bet on October 4th

In 1960, with the constitution of the State Council, new accents in church policy, which I considered significant. In his programmatic statement he said: In order to convince people, you need not only clarity, but also patience; it is not the volume that decides, but the better argument.

He rejected collaboration with "a West German so-called German church leadership,"

That is, he considered the leadership of the Protestant regional churches in the GDR by the Evangelical Church of Germany (EKD) in West Berlin

impossible. Not only had it concluded a military pastoral care contract<sup>1</sup> with the Federal Republic of Germany government, but its leader, Bishop Otto Dibelius<sup>2</sup>, denied that the GDR leadership was even an authority. In doing so, he showed himself to be an agitator and cold warrior.

However, Ulbricht was very aware that other tendencies were beginning to take hold in the church leadership in the GDR. "The church officials in the GDR are becoming more and more convinced of the correctness of our government's policy, which is guided by love of peace and the principles of true humanity."

The new Chairman of the State Council thus emphasized: Christianity and the humanistic goals of socialism are not opposites.

In the years that followed, the concept of (possible) humanistic commonality became the core statement that progressive Christians relied on. But that couldn't be the end

, but at best be a starting point for further considerations. As a theologian and political official, I have tried to bring this idea to life in words and writing.

Between the Christian commandment of charity and the socialist goal of full social

There was a fundamental commonality between justice, whether some people thought more individually, others more collectively. But we Christians had to learn that it is not enough to give a glass of water to the thirsty, but that perhaps a water pipe needs to be built. That the man who fell to the robbers must not only be bandaged up, but the entire area must be cleared of lawbreakers. And Marxists had to understand that the great goals also had to be available in the small coin of everyday life so that they did not become mere phrases.

Among the Christian population there were

At that time there was approval of Ulbricht's groundbreaking speech. Emil Fuchs<sup>3</sup>, the great old religious socialist, collected more than enough money for a letter of thanks to Ulbricht

32,000 signatures. He handed this letter to Ulbricht on February 9, 1961 at his official residence in Berlin-Niederschönhausen.

During this meeting, both once again formulated their point of view.

It was the head of state and party leader's first official conversation with Christian citizens - Fuchs was accompanied by a delegation of pastors and lay preachers. And it was by no means a coincidence that this first one

Meetings did not take place with representatives of church leadership. Ulbricht didn't seem to have the prerequisites for that yet.

The delegation could not speak for "the churches," but rather articulated their commonality, which had been intellectually clarified and tested over years of practical cooperation. All progressive Christian traditions of the past found their fulfillment in the GDR, explained Fuchs. And Ulbricht expressed his satisfaction that the signatories of the letter understood the meaning and aim of his programmatic declaration and its significance for the relationship between church and state as well as for the

human and political relationships between Christians and non-Christians in the GDR were well understood. In the historically short period of its world history, socialism did more to realize the humanistic and social ideals and commandments of Christianity than all previous social orders combined.

Feudalism and capitalism - despite their often intrusively Christian overtones - pursued goals that were in irreconcilable contradiction to the moral values of original Christianity.

»But I'll come as part of ours

practical and friendly cooperation," Ulbricht continued, "that socialists, communists and Christians - regardless of their different worldviews - belong together and simply have to work together in shaping life and society and securing peace on this earth. A Christian who takes his humanistic and social ideals seriously, who clears his head of prejudices and the baggage of a dead past, should actually have no choice but to unite with socialism.

And I think we always should

and be warmly welcomed at every state and social level and treated with respect and friendship."

The progressive Christian groups experienced their greatest charisma in the 1960s. I am thinking of the Weißensee working group, the ecclesiastical brotherhood of Saxony, the Association of Evangelical Pastors in the GDR, the "Thuringian Way" under regional bishop Moritz Mitzenheim<sup>4</sup> and the CDU in the GDR. The "Christian Circles" working groups of the National Front made a good contribution to the conversation between Christians and Marxists at the district and district level.

This was an agreement on the foundations of practical politics, primarily peace politics.

In the summer of 1964, Ulbricht conferred with representatives of the Thuringian church leadership under Bishop Mitzenheim. It was not just about basic intellectual questions, but also about current political requirements of peace policy and the relationship between the two German states. The Thuringian church leadership exploited the opportunities for cooperation and constructive cooperation to a much greater extent than the other regional churches in the GDR.

Mitzenheim was completely different

theological presuppositions as a fox came to conclusions similar to this one. A rather conservative churchman with a warm national church background, as a decidedly Lutheran Christian he avoided placing Christian demands on the organization of society. Based on Luther's Two Kingdoms doctrine, he insisted that the pulpit and the town hall should not be confused. So that church and state each have to carry out their specific tasks.

So he was also safe from the danger of modernist preaching of the Word of God as a call to political action

Misunderstanding change and thus politicizing it in the wrong way. But he especially recognized that Christians, as citizens, have to enforce what is most reasonable and best serves people, and that church officials have to encourage them to do this in the spirit of political diakonia, just as the church does with the basic questions of life such as: should not remain silent on the question of peace in a false aloofness from the world.

Like hardly any other bishop, Mitzenheim was convinced of the basic humanistic character of the socialist order, for which he increasingly took sides. Standing by his side

Senior church councilor Gerhard Lotz<sup>5</sup> and a number of pastors from the regional church. The immediate reason for the Wartburg conversation with Walter Ulbricht was Mitzenheim's resignation from the pulpit at the start of the world wars 50 and 25 years ago, which he sent to all Protestant bishops in both German states.

In this conversation on August 18, 1964, which was subsequently placed next to the conversation on February 9, 1961, Ulbricht stated that in the past three and a half years Marxists and Christians had made a lot of progress in their commonality. This way

We have to go further, because the stronger the unity of the GDR citizens, the more likely it will be possible to win over the German citizens to actively work for peace and understanding. Mitzenheim's resignation from the pulpit served this cause, especially the reminder to do more to prevent wars, said Ulbricht. The government of the GDR advocates general and complete disarmament in Germany as the result of a step-by-step process.

No German state, Ulbricht continued, should be given power to dispose of nuclear weapons. You should

instead talk about a nuclear weapons-free zone.

One must start from the real situation that developed after the Second World War and that led to the existence of two German states. In this sense, the post-war period must end and a period of peace must begin. Ulbricht Mitzenheim said that human relief could then be achieved much more easily, for example through a new permit agreement<sup>6</sup> with the West Berlin Senate.

At a meeting in August 1969 on the 5th anniversary of their memorable

At the meeting, Bishop Mitzenheim emphasized again that the community of Christians and Marxists is not an alliance of convenience, this connection has deeper roots. The socialist GDR is also the state of Christians, because they know that a social order that has egoism, exploitation and oppression as structural principles should not determine the future. The contract signed by Chancellor Adenauer and the EKD Council Chairman Bishop Otto Dibelius, by Defense Minister Franz Josef Strauß and the President of the Church Chancellery, Heinz Brunotte, on February 22, 1957 regulated military pastoral care in the Bundeswehr. Although emphasis was placed on it

Distinction from military chaplaincy in the Imperial and Nazi Empires, the military chaplains were - in contrast to back then - "free from state influence", but doubts were (and are) justified.

The legal basis for the work of Catholic military chaplains in the Bundeswehr is still the Reich Concordat of 1933. As early as March 1957, GDR Defense Minister Willi Stoph rejected this

"Negotiations" with the EKD, a "NATO church", about church activity in the National People's Army. And even after 1990, the state leadership of the churches in the so-called new federal states did not want to follow this military pastoral care agreement, because the proximity to the state could not be overlooked: the military chaplains, the priests in uniform, were, after all, state officials. So the East German regional churches were initially calmed with a temporary solution. Since the beginning

In 2004, however, the (West German) military pastoral care treaty also applies without restrictions in East Germany.

Otto Dibelius (1880-1967), Protestant theologian, joined the CDU in 1945, gave himself the title of bishop and saw himself as "Bishop of Berlin-Brandenburg" until 1966. In this capacity he was also chairman of the council of the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD) from 1949 to 1961.

After the First World War, Dibelius represented the

"Stab in the back legend" from the troops that were undefeated in the field. In 1928 he confessed to anti-Semitism in his "Easter Letter to the Pastors": "We will all [...] have full sympathy for the ultimate motives from which the ethnic movement emerged. I [...] always knew myself to be an anti-Semite." Dibelius welcomed Adolf Hitler's rise to power. On March 21, 1933 he stopped in his capacity as responsible

General Superintendent gave the celebratory sermon on the "Day of Potsdam" in the Garrison Church. In it he praised Hitler and his clique for the measures taken after the Reichstag fire, with which opponents of the regime were arrested and civil rights were largely suspended. Also as on the 1st

When the SA boycotted Jewish businesses in April 1933, he stood behind the Hitler state and declared: "Finally, the government felt compelled to organize the boycott of Jewish businesses - in the correct realization that the international connections of Judaism were fueling foreign agitation will most likely stop when it becomes economically dangerous for German Jewry. The result of all these events will undoubtedly be a curbing of Jewish influence in German public life.

Nobody will seriously object to this

can object." On September 7, 1949, Dibelius gave the ceremonial sermon at the opening of the German Bundestag in Bonn. After being honored with the Grand Cross of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1953, Dibelius was also awarded the (West-)Berlin honorary citizenship awarded.

Emil Fuchs (1874-1971), theologian and pastor, SPD member since 1921. After long, politically motivated conflicts with the Protestant Church of Thuringia and his community, he was appointed to the Kiel Pedagogical Academy in 1931. On leave in April 1933, Fuchs was released on September 20, 1933 and briefly imprisoned. He was then under surveillance by the Gestapo. After the founding of the GDR, he moved to Leipzig, where - now 75 years old - he became a professor of systematic theology and sociology of religion. Fuchs persuaded the GDR government to give him the opportunity to do so

Refusal of military service with weapons (construction soldiers) and protested - despite fundamental loyalty to the GDR state - against the persecution of the young community in the early 1950s and against the demolition of the Leipzig University Church in 1968. The GDR's CDU awarded him one

"Honorary membership". After his retirement in 1959, Fuchs left the Protestant church. Emil Fuchs wrote several important religious-socialist writings, including "Christian and Marxist Ethics". He was awarded the Patriotic Order of Merit and the »Banner of Labor« honored.

Moritz Mitzenheim (1891-1977), studied theology in Leipzig, Berlin, Jena and Heidelberg, pastor. From 1945 to 1970 regional bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Regional Church of Thuringia. Delegate to the German People's Congress, from 1955 to

1961 member of the EKD. In 1961, the GDR honored him with the Patriotic Order of Merit in gold.

Gerhard Lotz (1911-1981), studied theology, philosophy and law in Frankfurt am Main, Göttingen, Leipzig and Königsberg, church lawyer, after becoming a prisoner of war in 1946, senior church councilor and head of the legal department of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Thuringia, since 1948 deputy chairman of the regional church council and member of the Thuringian Synod until he retired in 1969. With Bishop Mitzenheim he conceived the "Thuringian Way". Member of the CDU since 1945, since 1956 he has been a member of the main board, a member of the GDR Peace Council and the World Peace Council. Member of the People's Chamber from 1967 to 1976.



Due to the border security measures on August 13, 1961, West Berliners were not allowed to do so

more possible to visit the eastern part of the city and thus relatives, friends and acquaintances. The problem was less the GDR, but rather the Federal Republic of Germany and West Berlin. They refused any contact with GDR departments in order to avoid giving the impression that they recognized and accepted this state and its institutions. In 1963, Willy Brandt, as Governing Mayor of Berlin, risked an advance that would lead to Deputy Prime Minister Alexander Abusch on January 5th.

December 1963 responded positively with a letter. Twelve days later, GDR State Secretary Erich Wendt and Senate Councilor Horst Korber signed the first pass agreement, which was only for diplomatic reasons could be called "passenger ticket protocol". Between December 19, 1963 and December 5 In January 1964, around 700,000 West Berliners crossed the border. Three followed by 1966

further permit agreements.

Manfred Scheler

How to work with cadres

Manfred Scheler, born in 1929, apprenticed as a machine fitter, joined the SPD in 1945, SED in 1946, secretary of the FDJ district leadership Weißwasser and Niesky from 1946 to 1949, studied at the Komsomol University in Moscow in 1953/54, then first secretary of the FDJ district leadership Dresden, chairman of the Dresden district council from 1963 to 1982, then chairman of the VdGB until 1990, from 1986 to

In 1990 he was also chairman of the People's Chamber faction of the VdGB, and in the early 1990s he was a member of the Federal Court of the German Football Association (DFB).

In 1963 I was supposed to take on the role of chairman of the council of the Dresden district; until then I was agriculture secretary in the SED district leadership. To confirm this, I was invited to the Politburo meeting in Berlin. Walter Ulbricht took a lot of time. He asked me a few questions, for example he wanted to know what qualified me for this new task and how I would do the work

in the district that he thought was complicated. But which district had no special features and was not "complicated"? He kept prodding and prodding.

I didn't have the impression that my answers convinced him and I already said that I probably wouldn't be confirmed for this position, although some Politburo members came to my aid. Like the 1st.

Secretary of the Leipziger BL, Paul Fröhlich.

Ulbricht had probably noticed my inner capitulation and felt he had to cheer me up by saying that he wasn't examining me

He wanted to find reasons to reject the proposal, but rather he wanted to find out where and how I could be helped to prepare for this task.

It was finally decided that I would spend four weeks shadowing the council chairman in the Leipzig district. And I was given a working group from the Central Committee with whose help I was supposed to thoroughly analyze the situation of the companies in the district. I was then supposed to present the results of the investigation to the district council and make suggestions for improvements and also explain them. Then I should go to

make a choice.

That's how it happened.

I would then work in this role for almost two decades.

Also with the experience of how to work with the squad that I learned from Ulbricht.

And I had learned something else from him: that it is better to form your own opinion than to let someone else convince you.

In the autumn of the previous year, the potato harvest was more than poor, and the Dresden district was far behind compared to other districts. In the end, everything remained with the agricultural secretary of the district management

hang.

Walter Ulbricht stayed in the guesthouse of the Council of Ministers in Gohrisch together with Erich Apel and Günter Mittag and asked the district management secretariat for a discussion. The

As the saying goes, the 1st secretary of the district management was in a tailspin because he feared a thunderstorm, especially because of the poor supply situation. Come up with something, he asked me, what you should tell the old man about why you are not fulfilling the plans. And practice self-criticism. Self-criticism is always good.

Since I could hardly put ashes on my head because of the weather, I said

I have to hold the management responsible for it. We were in the year after the cooperative, so there were teething problems with the agricultural production cooperatives, I would say, we were not able to get all the farmers involved. We have made ideological mistakes here, Comrade Ulbricht...

Ulbricht was waiting for us.

"Comrades," he began, before I could express my contrition. On the way here I saw large areas under water, which is a shame. I can imagine the difficulties farmers face with the harvest

the potatoes are already rotting in the field...

I let my self-critical speech slide. Why should I talk about ideological problems when Ulbricht himself had noticed that these were meteorological problems? So we were able to talk to each other very calmly and with concentration about what needed to be done to help the LPG farmers.

Klaus Steiniger

It's not just soldiers who should keep their lockers tidy

Klaus Steiniger, born in 1932, son of a Berlin lawyer, lost numerous relatives in Auschwitz. At 16 he joined the SED in West Berlin. After moving to the eastern part of Berlin, he studied law. Later public prosecutor, mayor and editor of German television. A year after receiving his doctorate in 1966, he moved to

Foreign policy department of the daily newspaper Neues Deutschland, of which he was a member of the editorial team until the end. He has been editor-in-chief of the monthly magazine since 1998

»RedFox«.

I only met Walter Ulbricht personally very peripherally, but in...

"historic hour". In October 1949, my father Peter-Alfons Steiniger introduced me to him in what later became the House of Ministries. In the stone hall of the bulky building, I, almost 17, was able to take part in the founding of the GDR state in the tiny audience area separated only by a red cord. So I was there when

The youngest member of the Provisional People's Chamber, Margot Feist, congratulated Wilhelm Pieck, who had just been elected President, on behalf of the House.

The era in which party leaders of the caliber of Wilhelm Pieck, Otto Grotewohl, Walter Ulbricht, Heinrich Raus, Hermann Materns and Bruno Leuschners were able to inspire an entire generation of ambitious and committed young people can only be partially conveyed to those who followed. At that time there was no distance between "big" and "small" comrades, and no excessive protocol stifled the physical

and emotional closeness. Many functionaries emerged from class struggles of the proletariat, not from power struggles within the apparatus. The party has not yet flattened out into one that attracts careerists

"Mass organization" and was therefore perceived by the class-conscious part of the workforce as a real vanguard.

When the pioneer republic opened in Berlin's Wuhlheide in 1952, the GDR was still less than three years old. The President was welcomed as the highest guest of honor. After a short "ceremonial act," Wilhelm Pieck looked around for a bit

extensive grounds around. It happened completely by chance that at a certain point in time I was right at his side with three or four other comrades, including perhaps a "bodyguard." Suddenly an older man with proletarian appearance, who was standing somewhere on the side of the road, shouted seven urgent words to us: "Watch out for old Willem!"

The small scene reflects something big: in the eyes of this worker, the head of state of that time was "Olle Willem" remained. Would such warmth and closeness have been conceivable later?

Otto Grotewohl was also a "hands-on" politician. I first met him at the entrance to the Cultural Workers' Club on Jägerstrasse, which was a popular meeting place for Berlin intellectuals at the time - long before the artists' club "Die Möwe" opened. There my father introduced me to the nationally known party leader. "My name is Otto Grotewohl," he said to me, when I was almost a teenager. Grotewohl was considered particularly quick-witted. In the Senate Hall of the Humboldt University he occasionally spoke to professors, quoting a statement from Marx

was wrong in assigning the words to the great old man that wars have always been the locomotives of history. When a participant in the audience who knew the original text called out to him that Marx had named the revolutions as the locomotives of history, Grotewohl did not allow himself to be disturbed and replied: "The wars too!"

When the Chinese head of government, Chou En-lai, was greeted by Grotewohl at an event in the Auditorium Maximum after my father had awarded him an honorary doctorate as dean of the Law Faculty at Humboldt University

our Prime Minister suddenly lost the name of the distinguished guest from the Far East. So he listed all the offices and functions of the person who had just been honored one after the other. Than him

When "ammunition" threatened to run out, an attentive observer of the event rushed to the podium to hand Grotewohl a saving note at the last second. With a sigh of relief he said:

"Comrades Chou Enlai."

However, the field of greats of those days was dominated by Walter Ulbricht, who was by no means populist or popular. Definitely not without the gift of quick wit

However, he is not a master of polished words, but rather a supporter of a Spartan way of speaking and living. He was horrified by empty words.

I learned a lot about Ulbricht from my father Peter-Alfons Steiniger. He was one of the 400 members of the Provisional People's Chamber, which the GDR founded on October 7, 1949. Like Viktor Klemperer, he was a member of the Kulturbund faction.

Previously, like everyone else involved in the founding of the state, he had been a member of the German People's Council and served as secretary of the Constitutional Committee headed by Otto Grotewohl

The first constitution of the GDR, originally intended for a unified Germany, was handcrafted. Perhaps piquant: significant parts of the text were written in our West Berlin apartment at the Botanical Garden.

As president of the German Administrative Academy in Forstzinna, where the GDR management cadres for the district and district levels were trained, my father constantly had to deal with Walter Ulbricht. He intervened – in a very positive sense – in what was happening at “his” academy as a conversation partner, advisor and constructive critic. That found out

I from my father, who died on May 27, 1980 and was buried on the Pergolenweg of the Socialist Memorial in Berlin-Friedrichsfelde.

As a journalist, I got to know Walter Ulbricht's political style and his efforts to put a stop to any kind of whitewashing.

I was senior editor and foreign correspondent for Neue Deutschland for two and a half decades. The party's central organ often appeared quite cumbersome and was by no means always characterized by professional splendor. Nevertheless, you always felt that when you read it

socialist concerns and an ideology committed to Marxism.

While Günter Schabowski, who was capable as editor-in-chief but later degenerated into the human and political lack of character of a dyed-in-the-wool renegade, himself highlighted every critical sentence in the Central Committee minutes by remarking that the enemy was already criticizing us enough, we didn't have to do it too do it yourself, Ulbricht followed an absolutely contrary motivation. He hated any cover-up of grievances. For him, black always remained black and white always remained white, while nuances were far less his thing.

Ulbricht pushed for the deficits and those who caused them - possibly even high-ranking ones - to be named without regard to the person, sometimes throwing the baby out with the bathwater. At that time there was a tendency towards almost grotesque prudery in the party. Shortly after the war, our tone was both straightforward and often harsh. At the Humboldt University in my time, the following joke was spread, not entirely without reason: The secretary of the central party leadership meets the party secretary of the faculty.

“How many comrades are you?” he wants to know. “One hundred,” it reads

Answer. “And how many of them have already received a party punishment for immoral behavior?”

“Ninety-eight.”

After a moment's hesitation: “Don't worry, comrade, we'll get them both too.”

In the columns of the ND, under such important editors-in-chief as Hermann Axen and Rudolf Herrnstadt, a number of articles that went down in the press history of the GDR appeared, in which plain language was spoken and the table was cleared. Missteps were by no means taboo for their own comrades. An example: In the post

»Colleague Zschau and colleague Brumme«

It was about the leadership style of a very deserving comrade who was highly placed at the state level, who was reprimanded for suppressing legitimate criticism and demoted in office. Another memorable title was: “Discordant tones in the Brandenburg Concert.” It dealt with the behavior of those responsible at the Brandenburg steelworks and also met with great response.

Walter Ulbricht was on the lookout like a gun dog to track down shortcomings and omissions in the economy. This resulted in one in the annals of the old ND

received grotesque: In keeping with the ideas of the Secretary General, the editorial team sometimes opened fire on defaulters and wrongdoers in their editorials, which later often spread yawning boredom. On a spring day at the end of the 1960s, the long-deceased journalist Franz Krah was commissioned to write such an article. This involved, among other things, the misconduct of senior employees at a state-owned company in the Karl-Marx-Stadt district.

When Krah's column was discussed in a small circle, one of the reviewers took exception to it

the author considers the criticized work as

“example” was what he called. Franz, who is responsible for his illegibility

Scripture was known, replaced the offending word with the vocabulary

“typical”.

When the page came to the final check in the evening, the astonished proofreaders read: “In a well-known Karl Marx Städter work, which can also be used as an appiset for many other companies...”

The compositor had Krah's Krakel

“typically” he couldn't read and he let his imagination run wild. But the comrades in the greater area knew what to do.

The unknown neologism guides itself

comes from French and has long been part of the usual economic vocabulary in the GDR, explained an "expert". Nobody contradicted him. 850,000 copies of the A edition went through the printing presses. When the editor-in-chief Günther Kertzscher came to the house late at night, the B edition for Berlin, Brandenburg and abroad, which had only been produced that night, was saved from a continuation of the disaster. Kertzscher immediately stumbled upon the imaginative vocabulary in the first line of the editorial, asked for the manuscript, and Krahls deciphered it

Hieroglyphs and initiated the correction.

The next day, the editorial team of the women's magazine Für Dich asked me for a suitable pseudonym for a series of small foreign policy articles, which I had promised the paper: I recommended »Claudia Appiset«.

The caliber of Walter Ulbricht was illustrated not least by the fact that - apart from spiteful mockery of his dialect and manner of speaking or hostile attacks - he became the target of countless witty, pointed jokes. One was shortly after production

diplomatic relations between the GDR and the Maldives were circulated. Most GDR citizens first had to look on the map to see where the island kingdom was.

These days, Walter Ulbricht sees the same guard soldier in front of the State Council building morning, noon and evening. When he asked him why he would never be replaced, he was told: "Comrade Chairman of the State Council, I am liable to punishment!" "Why?"

"Because I didn't know where the Maldives were."

Ulbricht admonishes the young man:

"Well, that's not good. A soldier has to keep his locker in order!"

Klaus Wenzel

Without the two Ulbrichts the hotel would exist

Not "Neptune".

Klaus Wenzel, born in 1937, fisherman, cook, hotel manager on the

"Friendship of Nations", director of the Hotel "Warnow" in Rostock from 1966 to 1969, initiator and director of the hotel since it opened in 1971

"Neptune" in Rostock-Warnemünde. Awarded top hotelier in the USA in 2002, honored as best German hotelier in 2003. In the meantime

Pensioner.

The Ulbrichts always stayed in the Hotel Warnow, which I managed, when they came to Rostock for the Baltic Sea Week. At the time, this was probably the largest and most important international political event that the GDR organized annually. The two of them felt very comfortable with us, and Lotte Ulbricht repeatedly asked me if I had a wish. She obviously wanted to show her gratitude. I always waved gratefully and humbly. When she didn't let up, I blurted out: "I want a new hotel!" And she responded calmly: "Write that down

Sheet of paper, Comrade Klaus." I did that. I sketched mine

considerations and thus made it clear that I was not completely familiar with the bottlenecks of the GDR economy. But the Ulbrichts were impressed by my idea of building a world-class hotel - worthy of the Baltic Sea Week - on the Warnemünde sand.

Walter Ulbricht arranged a meeting with the first secretary of the SED Rostock district leadership, Harry Tisch, and other important people, including the general director of the Interhotels.

He began his explanation by pointing out that I was 32 years old

I was probably still a little too young for such a task, whereupon Ulbricht explained: "Comrade Siegert, the consultation is over for you." At the end there was a short note and a decision from the district leadership - and then I could get started. I first looked at 42 hotels in six countries and knew: I had money for a "Trabant" - but I wanted a "Mercedes".

Apart from Ulbricht's promise that I could call him at any time if things didn't go any further, there was no help from Berlin. I only took advantage of his offer once. As a result, he sent all the ministers, we had two dozen, after me

Rostock. They hated me, the young rascal, because of my demands. I wanted modern kitchen facilities, but I was referred to Soviet facilities. My kitchen would have to be twice as big to accommodate all the appliances, I complained. The same with the telephone system. Or the ventilation. I don't want an extension...

The only person who came to my aid was Transport Minister Otto Arndt. He seemed to be impressed by my unshakable self-confidence and my irrepressible will. And he finally convinced his colleagues.

On the 20th anniversary of the GDR, on the 7th

The groundbreaking ceremony took place in October 1969. Before that, I had to convince the people of Warnemünde to move the water lily pond and memorial stone at the construction site. Of course that wasn't possible with the adjacent maternity ward. Since we also work in the construction pit at night - the loud pile-driving work was particularly annoying - I explained that the future hotel would sponsor all children born during the night. Strange, from that moment on, no children were born there during the day, only the delivery room was busy at night.

On June 4, 1971, our house was opened not far from the Warnemünde Mole.

Almost a year later, Fidel Castro came with a Cuban delegation

"Neptune" became his residence, and political negotiations with the GDR leadership were also conducted there. At Castro's request, the Ulbrichts also took part in a boat trip, and Fidel invited them to the hotel the next day, which was Saturday. They themselves stayed outside, I think in Dierhagen.

In the morning the two old people stood in the foyer - and caused a commotion in the wings.

Werner Lamberz pulled me aside

and demanded that I show them both the door. "You have to throw them out, Honecker definitely doesn't want to see them here."

"Why me?" I asked back.

"Because you are the master of the house!" Lamberz's explanation brooked no contradiction.

So I fulfilled the most unpleasant assignment I have ever received. I greeted the two Ulbrichts and pointed out that the entire hotel had been declared a protocol area and I didn't have a free minute to give them the attention they needed. But I would like to invite her to Monday, I would be there all day

only there for them and could, as promised, show them the whole house.

They were both smart enough to understand the real reason for the expulsion and spared me the embarrassment of asking. They turned around and left the hotel without a word.

On Monday we spent a very pleasant day together. I showed them the house, they had some of the works of art explained to me and asked questions with interest. Both of them showed with every gesture that they didn't hold any grudges against me.

But perhaps they were also aware that this lack of style with which they were met did not happen overnight

came. So it wasn't new to them.

In the guest book he wrote in his wide, difficult-to-read handwriting: "Gen. Director, comrades employees of the Hotel Neptun!

Thank you very much for the imaginative design of the hotel and the good care of the guests. In essence, the hotel is a sanatorium with many facilities for the rehabilitation of the health of working people and their family members.

Many thanks to Gen. Wenzel, who, as director, made every effort to get to know the world level with the support of the SED district leadership

to apply the best for Neptune. The ministries and the hotel industry have many good examples here.

I wish Gen. Wenzel and the staff further success and personally all the best. June 26, 1972."

Edmund Weber

Replacement by force of arms in Dölln? This is absolute nonsense

Edmund Weber, born in 1927, Soviet prisoner of war in Karelia from 1945 to 1949, then became a new teacher of Russian in Heiligenstadt, where he also taught in the MfS district office, which led to him being hired as an interpreter. From 1952 to 1990 worked in the main personal protection department, last

Rank of lieutenant colonel. From September 1961 to August 1973 as

"Personal companion" responsible for Walter Ulbricht's safety.

You were responsible for Walter Ulbricht's safety for twelve years, have up to now adhered to your obligation of confidentiality and are only now ready to answer questions about him. You are a contemporary witness who can report from your own knowledge and is not dependent on rumors and assumptions. Hence my first question: Was there ever an attack on Walter Ulbricht?

No never. But that was probably less because of us, but rather because - whether we want to admit it today or not - he always sought closeness to other people. But that was exactly where our problem lay: He went up to people, shook hands, and talked to them without any suspicion. He had no idea that anything could happen. We sometimes sweat blood and water. We knew from literature and television about various attacks and attempts on politicians in other countries. (Starting with US President Garfield, who was shot in the back at a train station in 1881, to Lenin, who was shot in the back in 1918 after a speech in a...

The Moscow factory fired the social revolutionary Kaplan, or Mahatma Gandhi, who was murdered by a Hindu fanatic in 1948, to US President J.

F. Kennedy 1963.) The list of murder and terrorist attacks was already very long back then. In this respect, public figures have always been and are at risk, even if they are loved. Think of John Lennon, he really had no enemies - apart from the FBI, which

spied on him in the 70s. Well, Walter Ulbricht sometimes really worried us when he walked up to people without suspicion and unprotected.

Please tell me what a normal working day in the life of the Chairman of the State Council was like from the point of view of the bodyguard?

It started with morning exercise. He did gymnastics on the terrace or ran through the forest settlement on roller skis. That took about half an hour. And after breakfast we went to work. Then I picked him up from home. At around 8:30 a.m. he was sitting at his desk in the Central Committee or State Council.

His main office was in the SED Central Committee building.

Yes. When he carried out state tasks, he moved to the State Council building. Until completion

During construction in 1964, he resided in Niederschönhausen Castle.

Did he walk from the Central Committee to the State Council building?

He wanted it. But we drove. In this respect, security triumphed over him. There were always a lot of people out and about in the center of Berlin. Also from abroad. That seemed to us to be an unacceptably high risk.

How was the meal?

He had lunch around 1 p.m. I previously stayed upstairs in the dining room on the 7th.

Called on the floor. He didn't eat potatoes. The kitchen prepared rice or noodles. Sometimes I also called his wife's sister Lotte.

She lived under the same roof as the Ulbrichts in Pankow. They lived there before the family moved to the forest settlement in Wandlitz.

Does that mean that Walter Ulbricht kept his city apartment even after moving and occasionally ate his meals there?

It was like this. Ulbricht's wife's sister was essentially the family's housekeeper and cook. Walter Ulbricht lived a very healthy life.

Not just because it was prescribed to him or because he was vainly following his line, but because it was a need for him.

He hated gluttony and drinking and lived an almost ascetic life.

After eating he withdrew and rested a bit. But that was only when he was past 70 years old. Not before.

How did you perceive his working day afterwards?

If he was in the office, he reserved the afternoon for conversations. Then the people gave each other the handle. His workload was enormous.

It is said that there were mostly visitors from outside: experts, artists, athletes...

True. He enjoyed consulting with experts. He was able to listen patiently. I experienced that after the

He had new ideas during conversations, which he then dictated to his secretary.

And when was closing time?

In recent years around 6, 7 p.m. But sometimes it was much later, especially when there were appointments. He liked to go to the theater or to a concert and then exchange ideas with artists. When we drove to Wandlitz earlier than usual, we knew: He wanted to row on Lake Liepnitz. He was an active athlete. Rowing was one of his passions. Athletes had given him a rowing boat for his birthday.

Was he rowing alone?

Sometimes his wife went along as helmsman.

Was she only the coxswain when rowing?

I guess so.

So it's just a rumor that she ran the regiment at home?

That's the way it is. They were both a well-rehearsed team that, of course, also argued. When he got into a lot of trouble at work, his wife Lotte was sometimes something of a lightning rod. I felt that. But I experienced both of them as a couple who treated each other very lovingly and leniently: two people who were very focused on each other, spiritually together, but above all

politically connected people. They were partners and always close. But he and Lotte were also two strong personalities who could clash. They complemented each other.

Do you have an example of this?

Walter Ulbricht, for example, received all new publications from GDR publishers. He looked at them. The ones he thought were important he took home with him, the others went to the library. In Wandlitz, I saw that Lotte read a lot, highlighted the most important passages for her husband and made annotations or excerpts. This meant that Walter no longer had to read everything himself, which was what he was supposed to do

wouldn't have had the time either. But he was always well informed about new releases. They both discussed it very intensively during walks.

Did you regularly go for walks in Wandlitz?

Not just in Wandlitz. Everywhere we were, whether in Moscow or Leipzig, anywhere. He had to exercise half an hour before going to bed.

And did he do his morning exercise everywhere?

Yes. When we were in Oberhof, he did his exercises on the balcony as usual, of course together with his wife. And after breakfast

we went skiing. Cross-country skiing.

Have you skied too?

I had no other choice if I had to "guard" him.

Understand. And Walter Ulbricht left you behind? You were younger after all.

But he is more accomplished. I was a beginner. In the first few years we went to Oberwiesenthal, where we stayed in an NVA guest house. Eberhard Riedel, a ten-time GDR champion in alpine skiing, who also took part in the Olympic Games three times, trained him there. It should also be mentioned that Walter Ulbricht also skates in winter

either on a spray ice rink in Wandlitz or in the Sportforum Dynamo, and sometimes they also did their pirouettes as a couple.

Was Ulbricht a hunter?

He went hunting when he had guests and felt it was politically necessary. But he was not a passionate hunter.

There are these photos with Leonid Brezhnev from the hunt.

Yes, he accompanied the CPSU General Secretary. Sometimes he also left this to Erich Honecker.

I went with him three times to hunt rabbits with the Diplomatic Corps. He was very interested in the conversations

more than anything else.

You speak Russian well and accompanied him on trips to the Soviet Union. What was his relationship with the Soviet comrades?

Very good. It was actually a relationship of brotherly trust. Ulbricht confidently represented the national interests of the GDR. Of course I can't judge whether his partners always liked that. But I found him to be a reliable friend of the Soviet Union until the end. I also spoke Polish, which is why I accompanied Ulbricht on all his trips to Poland. Once

I also interpreted a conversation with Gomulka because the machine was so small that there wasn't even room for the actual interpreter.

Did you also interpret conversations?

No, Werner Eberlein usually did that, and sometimes Lotte Ulbricht also stepped in, especially when very difficult matters were involved.

If you compare the current security effort during state visits or the protection of local politicians with the corresponding measures in the GDR, what is your verdict?

Incomparable. The effort in the

GDR was significantly lower. I want to say: He was more normal. My command had a maximum of six comrades. When the Chairman of the State Council was on the move, two vehicles accompanied him, one at the front and one at the back. On vacation he sometimes only drove a car.

When he went for a walk outside, I was in close proximity to him, a second man walked in front and a third followed us.

Ms. Merkel thinks she remembers being on vacation in Dierhagen as a child or teenager and crossing the cordoned-off beach at the government guesthouse

annoyed.

Nonsense. The beach in front of the Council of Ministers' rest home was freely accessible. Holidaymakers were able to stroll along the water unhindered. There was even a nudist beach in the direction of Neuhaus. When we walked on the beach, the Ulbrichts walked past it too. They had no problems with the nudity. They weren't uptight after all. They came from the labor movement. I was in Dierhagen three or four times with the Ulbricht family. Everything was always pretty normal there.

Did Walter Ulbricht also speak to people there?

Of course. Without shyness, yes. How are things, how are you, where are you from, where are you staying, are you happy? Is the supply good? Etc. He used such ostensibly apolitical small talk to find out something about the mood in the country, unfiltered and unvarnished. That was always very important to him. And it wasn't done with paternal condescension, something like: I am Ulbricht and you are my subjects, now tell me how happy and content you are. He wasn't interested in the shoe, but in the place where it pinched. And people felt that too. Ulbricht was certainly not a very person

sociable person, but he was very communicative.

What were his demands?

Modest. His personal - not political - life was organized primarily by his wife Lotte. Right down to the menu. And above all: she always paid for everything. The two didn't accept anything for free. Everything was billed correctly. Lunch was often accompanied by a glass of Beaujolais. When we were in the Soviet Union, I bought Khvanchkara, a Georgian red wine. His wife took care of that too. That sort of thing didn't bother him.

Did your daily routine on vacation differ from the rest of the year?

Not necessarily. He did sports early on. Then we went for a walk until lunch. Afterwards he rested and read a lot. When he was abroad on vacation - in the Soviet Union or Poland - we brought him the most important mail once a week and he quickly looked through it. I stayed overnight at vacation spot. He then gave me the answers. As couriers we flew regular flights; there was no government plane that delivered the courier mail every day.

Where did he go on vacation?

Mostly in Oberhof and Dierhagen. In the

We were abroad in Pitsunda and Sochi. They took a cure in Barwycha near Moscow.

There are publications claiming that before Walter Ulbricht resigned from his position as First Secretary, an armed security detail drove to Dölln, placed him under house arrest and forced him to resign. You were his security guard and you know better than the rumor mongers.

The whole thing is complete nonsense! Unfortunately, Markus Wolff also spread such nonsense. I don't know what got into him. If you like that

If you spend a lot of time with a person, as I was with Ulbricht, then you can occasionally feel what's going on inside him. I had long suspected that it might be about my boss's resignation.

There have been several conversations between him and Brezhnev for at least a year.

A question like the change at the top of the party was not decided overnight and certainly not by force of arms. That was a long process. By the way: Without Brezhnev, Ulbricht's resignation would not have been possible. I knew Brezhnev well. We had both on

same birthday and he spoke to me every time we met. We smoked many a cigarette together. It may be that he had reservations about Walter Ulbricht. I can not judge over this.

But he always treated him with great respect and courtesy. Even if Erich Mielke had had the idea of sending a security detail to harass Ulbricht, neither Brezhnev nor Honecker would have allowed it. As far as I know, there was no such thing in the GDR.

Let's go back to the beginning. What are you like Walter?

Became Ulbricht's security companion?

That was random. I came back from my wedding leave and was informed that the position at Ulbricht was vacant. In the last few months three comrades had failed the test. Franz Gold gave me a long speech and asked me whether I would take on the task, to which I replied: If I said "no" after what you said, you would have to dismiss me, Comrade General.

So, I don't have much of a choice. The next day I drove to Bad

Liebenstein to introduce myself. The Ulbrichts were there for treatment.

But I think that my language skills were probably the decisive factor in me being given this task in 1961. Because it will not have been the affection for the Stasi. From my observation, his relationship with us as a security organ and also with the Soviet Chekists was rather distant. I don't want to rule out the possibility that the experiences from the Soviet Union in the 1930s and 1940s played a role.

Were you still in Dölln when he died? No, I had already left to look after foreign guests who had come to the World Festival and... Palace hotel in Berlin

had been. Comrade Lotte called me and said that Walter had fallen asleep in peace and dignity. His death affected me deeply.

Siegfried Anders

I took the protocol picture, the detail was determined by others

Siegfried Anders, born in 1933, born in Breslau and grew up in Thuringia, worked underground in potash mining from 1948. In 1954 he went to Berlin for the guard regiment and in the same year for personal protection. Training to become a photographer and master photographer.

Chief Photographer of Personal Protection. Use in state hunts

Protocol appointments in the State Council, the Central Committee and during trips abroad as well as non-public events by top GDR politicians. He was not one of the tenth of the approximately 500 bodyguards who were taken over by the new government.

How long have you been taking photographs?

Since I was 14 years old. My first camera was a Zeiss Ikon, one with a pull-out bellows. And my first assignment was a wedding. Word got around.

Who came up with the idea of using you as a photographer in Berlin?

That was Franz Gold, our boss. He

said, we have an event and you should take photos. Then protocol appointments were gradually added, at which no press was allowed. I took photos and then saw my photos in the newspaper the other day with the source: ADN/Zentralbild.



Were you mad because your name wasn't there?

No not at all. I was proud. Later the name was added: ZB/Anders. That was the deal: I didn't get any fee from the agency since I was employed by the bodyguard, but they named me as the author of the picture. So then I got repeated

Targeted orders from news agencies, newspaper editorial offices or GDR institutions when certain motifs were needed. Of course, this all went through official channels.

When did you first photograph Walter Ulbricht?

On May 1, 1958 in the stands in Berlin. And the first time on a trip abroad was in Moscow in September 1965. The visit took place on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the signing of the state treaty with the USSR. Also Prime Minister Willi Stoph, two of his deputies, two ministers, a deputy minister and a

State secretaries traveled with us, and the delegation numbered a total of around a hundred people. As usual, I was integrated into the press group. I was summoned to the Kremlin to photograph some protocol event, but the appointment did not take place and the economic agreement was not signed, as was obviously planned by the GDR. I waited in the hallway with my colleagues for free. But I had plenty of other photo opportunities as we traveled around the country.

Have you also photographed him privately?

Yes, when Lotte and Walter Ulbricht their daughter Beate, for example

brought a train with which she traveled to the Soviet Union to study. Lotte said goodbye to her at the Ostbahnhof with kisses; he was as usual, a little more reserved. When the two of them were out and about, as we say today, "bathing in the crowd," they approached people, usually speaking to women, while Walter preferred men. If you observed the two of them, it was a well-functioning division of labor. She was eager to communicate, he was cautious and deliberate, but then committed. Some of the most beautiful motifs occurred every year on June 30th, when pioneers visited him in Wandlitz on his birthday

Congratulations came.

In 1971 you took that well-known photo of Ulbricht receiving the Politburo in his dressing gown and slippers, which, when it appeared in New Germany and still today, caused outrage among those who remember it because it depicted the statesman Walter Ulbricht disavowed. How did this recording even come about?

The Chief of Minutes of the Central Committee called me on the morning of June 30th. The Politburo was going to Wandlitz to congratulate, he said. We need a picture for the newspaper. I didn't know how big the delegation would be,

which room this was supposed to take place in and grabbed my Hasselblad. It was a week and a half after that

Eighth Party Congress, in which Ulbricht was unable to take part because he had become ill and the doctors advised against taking part. The changing of the guard took place there. The delegates elected the Central Committee, and this confirmed Honecker in the role that he had already taken over from Ulbricht on May 3, 1971, at the Central Committee plenum.

I was at Ulbricht's house an hour before the appointment. He was still in bed, said Lotte Ulbricht. »Comrade Anders, it will take a while, then

"He will come." Then Walter Ulbricht appeared and greeted me. But he couldn't stand well and was noticeably weakened, so he sat down and waited. He didn't seem to know who or how many people would come either. So he sat there on the chair and waited. Then suddenly Honecker and the entire Politburo appeared and the room was filled. I stepped back to the wall to try and get everyone in the picture, but despite the wide-angle lens I couldn't.

That's why I made a two-part panoramic picture.

The film went to ADN and was developed there.

So you didn't make the prints yourself, didn't decide on the cropping and didn't see the pictures before they were published?

No. I was just the photographer.

Who released the two pictures?

I don't know that. I assume that this happened in the Central Committee.

How did you find the photo that appeared in ND the next day?

Like not good. At least the bottom part with the slippers should have been cut off. My colleagues, who knew that the unnamed picture was mine, did

criticized me harshly for this. Western agencies that originally wanted the picture preferred, not without reason, to facsimile the picture with the ND side so that the last person would understand the message it implied. The scandal was not the photo itself, but rather the publication of this excerpt and its placement in the party's central organ.

But perhaps the perception and interpretation were neither intended nor considered by those who put my photo in the newspaper. Maybe the message should just be: Walter Ulbricht is actually sick. After all, he was

was not at the party conference, which of course raised questions. There were discussions and speculations within and outside the party about the report that Ulbricht was absent "for health reasons." And now the picture should provide proof that he really isn't

feeling well. Many of my colleagues and acquaintances immediately said to me: Siegfried, the picture is not good. You're right. I don't think the later interpretation made it bad. It showed a decrepit old man in a less than advantageous position. You know, I'm not trying to justify it, just trying to explain to myself what's behind it

could have stuck.

You know Peter Hacks' poem "The Curse" that he made to accompany this photo. You also appear in it, as a nameless person "Photo artist."

No I do not know.

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Peter Hacks: The Curse

When the pack reached for him again,  
He hit like always. But the claw  
Suddenly, it stopped tearing. It was him

he staggered.  
And the blow was inaccurate. Almost amused, the patient became aware of his powerlessness and raised it  
Brow,  
And then his aging brain failed to accept the presence of the mighty one  
spirit.

And there they had him. Your bad  
Style recommended using humor.  
It should not be a shout, a laugh,  
Clown, not victim. He liked a pointed cap, a custom-made one

Dressing gown that protects the taper limbs,  
And so he was fitted into the gentle hollow of a worry chair.

When he was finally sitting, all set up, they boldly ventured near him.  
A photo artist was also obliged to  
That his testimony would go to the press and the crowd would know  
photographed,  
As they viewed it, see. But the chief of the dilettantes made himself the  
Holiday well-wishers.

And he saw the happiness in their faces.  
He saw sheep's faces, full of victory, and he saw them grinning into the lens (because they all wanted to get on the plate), and he  
knew each of them because he had often threshed each one.  
Out of his disgust at the visit, it secretly formed within him  
Curses.  
– Oh, my building is solid, has a roof and walls.  
No marveled or quick end can I predict your anger.  
Even a fool needs time to wear it off.  
I'll give you ten, twelve years

long  
Permanent suffering of your decline. Patron that you are, of  
slave souls.  
No concept illuminates your world,  
No credit should apply, no oath should apply  
And reports in unread newspapers about things that never happened.  
No road shall connect your land,  
No mail should find the recipient,  
And nothing shall be in your telephones but a roaring and a horror  
reside.  
Rust will destroy entire industrial plants,

because a gear is missing, gnaw down,  
While the leaves, which were discolored,

Get out of the trees, those corrupted by dirt.  
In the dairy farms the people will listen horribly to the cattle for food  
scream  
Or, hidden under the manure, find little piglets, little dead pigs. So between waste and rubbish, your time of lamentation shall be fulfilled. But then, on the edge of  
Destruction,  
Follow the fatherland's re-establishment of glory and shine upon mine

inseparable  
Unshakable foundations. –

He didn't speak a syllable. But understood  
All of them the content of his silence.  
And they desperately wanted to be gone  
From the group picture that she took specifically  
Had arranged and disappeared  
Quick and extremely tired of showing himself.  
But a tremor remained in their hearts.

Because an expert doesn't swear easily.

Rainer Fuckel

He was a disciplined patient and was never senile

Rainer Fuckel, born in 1937, was born and grew up near Bad Liebenstein. After attending school in 1951, he began an apprenticeship as a locksmith, joined the SED in 1953, worked as a journeyman in an SDAG company, and attended the Workers' and Farmers' Faculty in Jena in 1954/55. Instead of the planned engineering training, he studied medicine to, as it was said, the position

to strengthen the working class in the medical profession. Training as an internist at the Bad Liebenstein spa clinic.

Senior physician in the public health resort, 1968 chief physician in the government sanatorium

"Heinrich Mann." From 1971 to 1973 Ulbricht's "supervising doctor". Then, until 1991, back in Bad Liebenstein.

Since then he has been practicing medicine (together with his wife) in Ruhla.

You joined the SED as a locksmith apprentice at the age of 16. Why?

That was a reaction to the coup

17th of June.

Did you come from a political background?

No, my parents were apolitical.

It was a youthful reaction of defiance.

Did you regret that later?

No why? Party membership has neither done me any particular harm nor benefit. It was not an advantage to always have to live and act according to the principle: Where there is a comrade, there is the party! I don't regret that, on the contrary. In a society of organized irresponsibility, the lack of such a political and moral mission, which motivated millions of people at the time, is clearly noticeable.

How did you become chief physician?

Government Hospital. Didn't the party register help you?

Comrade Chance helped. I worked at the public health spa and was occasionally on call at the sanatorium. A state secretary noticed me and recommended me to Prof. Helga Wittbrodt, the head of the government hospital in Berlin, which also included the Heinrich Mann Sanatorium. The chief medical officer position was vacant, so I was appointed.

Prof. Wittbrodt briefly introduced me to the staff and left again. Afterwards, I have to say: It's amazing how much trust was placed in young people back then

became. But that was in keeping with the spirit of those years. I was just 30 and became the head of such an important institution without her knowing me personally.

What was she like as a boss? There is hardly any news about her.

Prof. Wittbrodt was a good boss; I was impressed by her confident composure. She let me walk on a long leash, as they say. Only when she called frequently did I know that something was up. However, she never clarified problems over the phone; she let me come to Berlin. That was their tactic. This was also the case in the summer of 1971. She called me:

»Comrade Fuckel, I would like you

"Speak once, please come here."

As usual, I examined myself critically: What did you do wrong, what problem is there, where did you say something wrong?

However, contrary to my fears, there was nothing of the sort. Comrade Ulbricht is sick, she told me, he is at home in Wandlitz, we need a doctor to attend him.

A personal doctor.

I deliberately don't use this term. He's also not someone who fits in with the GDR.

Did you agree?

Firstly, it was just the sanatorium

reconstructed in Bad Liebenstein, and secondly, I feel flattered by such an offer.

Why you?

Prof. Wittbrodt said that Walter Ulbricht wanted a doctor who had served from the ground up; he had enough "scientists" around him. He would prefer an army doctor - she couldn't tell me why, but she didn't have one. And: he also had to be able to inject, Ulbricht said.

Apparently he had already had bad experiences in this regard.

Have you ever had anything with him before?

had to do?

Not at all.

And then you went to Wandlitz with Prof. Wittbrodt?

Yes, after I agreed, she had to introduce me to him. And Prof. Baumann, consular doctor and cardiologist, was also there. We met Ulbricht lying in bed in his house. He looked at me carefully, although it was clear to me that he had already been informed who was standing at his bedside, he was just getting a personal impression by eye. He asked me a few questions, of course the most important one was whether I wanted to take on this task.

It's a 24-hour service and certainly not easy with him as a patient.

You had to move from Thuringia to Wandlitz?

No, I commuted. We were two colleagues and took turns: I was on duty for fourteen days and then two weeks off, during which time Dr. Mühlberg on site. There was another nurse at the medical base in Wandlitz. I was always picked up from Bad Liebenstein in a car and taken to Wandlitz and back again.

What exactly was your task?

To examine him daily, if necessary medical indications

and accompany him when he was on the move, for example to the State Council, the Central Committee or to Döllnsee.

What was he suffering from?

I also adhere to my medical confidentiality in Ulbricht's case.<sup>8</sup> Just this much: He was a man who was approaching 80, had been through difficult things and worked very hard, especially in the last 25 years, which - despite a healthy lifestyle: he didn't drink, he didn't smoke and played sports all his life - had left a noticeable mark on him.

What was your relationship with him like?

Surprisingly good. Between doctor and

There is naturally a distance between patients and here, I initially feared, it would be particularly large, which is why I was wrong.

Why did you accept that?

We were almost half a century apart in age, he was the first man in the state and embodied history, had seen the world and fought many a fight, while I, with all due respect, was an insignificant spa doctor from the provinces who had never left the Thuringian Forest had.

Inferiority complex?

Not at all. But that was the relationship. Nevertheless, Ulbricht left it

Not feeling the distance. Yes, that's right, he didn't talk much, seemed reserved but not unapproachable. Although he never addressed me with the "you" that was usual among comrades. He always watched me. I wouldn't have been able to address him as "you" either. I felt the same way with Prof. Wittbrodt. Many people called her "Helga." I could not do it. My respect was too great.

How did you notice that there was something like spiritual closeness?

I usually rode in the State Council Chairman's support vehicle. But every now and then he said: "Comrade Fuckel,

Get in with me." And then I sat next to him in the chaika. I knew what pressure he was under, felt the great political tensions he was exposed to in detail, and was amazed at how he took it all in, seemingly unmoved. Only sometimes did it burst out of him; no one can swallow everything without consequences.

I sometimes asked myself: Why doesn't anyone in the neighborhood come and check on him? Not one came by, not one. Even as an outsider you start to ponder. And later I inevitably experienced how he was deported and...

was put cold. Once Brezhnev was hunting with Honecker in the Schorfheide. Ulbricht put on his hunter's uniform, even though he wasn't a hunter like the others, and we drove to Hubertusstock Castle, where there was double excitement: firstly, Brezhnev's vehicle had burned out due to a short circuit, and secondly because Ulbricht appeared on the scene.

I experienced such blatant rejections several times. Also as Castro in the hotel in 1972

"Neptune" had descended and he invited Lotte and Walter Ulbricht, we were in Dierhagen, to his place after they

were at sea with the state yacht the day before. Hotel manager Wenzel had to get rid of the two Ulbrichts in the foyer on Lamberz's instructions. I think he was in Dierhagen for four weeks. He lay there in his sandcastle or swam outside. He was a good swimmer. How did he respond to such blatant rejections?

Well, he never made any comments about specific people, especially not in a derogatory way. His displeasure was evident in his blood pressure. I remember the Politburo meeting on October 26, 1971. He came out of the room with a very red face, his blood pressure was so high,

that the worst was to be expected. Obviously there must have been a tough argument that had upset him so much. I asked him later, and I admit that I was making a somewhat inadmissible leap:

"Comrade Ulbricht, I thought there was something like a father-son relationship between you and Comrade Honecker?" To which he only replied briefly: "I thought that too." That was the end of the conversation.

Only once did he react visibly angrily in public: We were at agra9 in Markkleeberg. The comrade who led the tour and did and explained everything to us took

continued reference to a plenary session that had taken place shortly before and now repeatedly quoted the First Secretary as if he had reinvented the bicycle. At some point Ulbricht burst out: "Stop it, there have been Central Committee meetings before!" That was the only time I heard him really loud.

Did you go for a walk with him too?

Yes, of course. After the four weeks in which he had to stay in bed because of heart failure, he was mobile again. We strolled through Wandlitz and then took a break on a bench. He told about his

Traveling as a journeyman carpenter and how he used to rub his feet with deer fat to avoid getting blisters. We shared an apple and chatted about personal matters. Political issues were the exception. I remember, probably because I am a doctor, how he was extremely upset that the CMEA had decided to hand over certain pharmaceutical production from the GDR to Hungary and Czechoslovakia. We would lose millions in currency proceeds as a result, he said, shaking his head.

Was he a snivelling patient?

Not at all. There was no grumbling.

As a doctor you were your boss, he did what you told him, he was very disciplined. But when he was lying there, the most effective medicine would have been if someone from the Politburo had come to visit him. There wasn't even a phone call. It was as if he had already died. That was bitter. And he bravely remained silent about it.<sup>10</sup>

But: Even when he was in the hospital bed, he always kept busy, mostly reading. I never saw him sitting idle or wasting time. To be clear: he was never senile.

It was said that he was stubborn and stubborn, he was

There were hints of the rigidity of old age.

He was in better physical and mental health than the last two popes in their final years of service and was still fully capable of running the affairs of state. The fact that he felt sidelined, that he was shown that he was no longer needed, I think accelerated his aging process. He consciously realized this and inevitably asked: What am I supposed to do here now?

You were there for dinner too.

Here too, as with all expenses, he was thrifty. A bowl of potato soup in the company canteen for fifty pfennigs was more than enough for him.

When the nurse and I ate alone in the restaurant in Wandlitz, the cook was happy to be able to show what he could do. He frowned upon incurring debts, both private and social. I remember once we were on the television tower with Nikolai Tomsy, who created the Lenin monument. The sculptor wanted a few postcards - Walter Ulbricht bought and paid for them in the shop there.

When you accompanied him to official and public meetings, you stayed discreetly in the background with your doctor's kit...

Discreet, but without a suitcase. The

he didn't want to see. He didn't want it to be known that there were two people there making sure he didn't fall over.

Two?

Sometimes there was Dr. Banaschak was there, a very cultivated, educated anesthetist who occasionally accompanied us. But no emergency ever occurred, with the exception of the Politburo meeting I mentioned earlier. This was the most critical situation in the two and a half years that I was at his side. We did not take part in the meetings inside. We sat in Gisela Glende's office and drank our coffee.

When did you return to Bad Liebenstein?

In the summer of 1973, shortly before his death. The renovation of the sanatorium was completed and I had to decide whether to stay or go.

I brought this up to him.

What did Walter Ulbricht say?

»Comrade Fuckel, go back. My days are numbered, and what will become of you then I don't know...» But he knew from the past what tended to happen in such cases. Everyone in the environment not only lost their "boss" but also became one "implemented". That went all the way to the driver. As if they were all infected

and have the leprosy of the ceded. As a farewell gift, Ulbricht gave me an illustrated book with a personal dedication and an Exakta SLR camera. I still have those. A few days later he died.

And Lotte Ulbricht?

Oh, she was a little rough at times, she had a mind of her own, but I got along well with her. After his death, she went to Bad Liebenstein a few times for treatment. Those high-ranking spa guests who until recently had swarmed around her now no longer wanted to sit near her. My wife and I

We looked after her when she was with us, we went on trips and drank coffee together

... During the time of reunification, when everything went haywire here in the public health resort and we heard about the alleged...

When "revolutionaries" were insulted, denounced and expelled, I expressed my disappointment and anger to her: "And we have been making ourselves miserable for decades like this!" I hoped she would agree with me, but she replied astonishingly: "Comrade Fuckel, we have probably asked too much of people in such a short time." She took the people who brought us in

their backs even fell into protection. She was more objective and fairer in her judgment than I was. And I'm still not at peace with myself for not offering her to move in with us to get away from Berlin.

The solidarity of the comrades among themselves, whose absence you painfully noticed back in Wandlitz when Ulbricht lay alone in his sick bed in 1971, was repeated at the end of 1989.

Yes. The way we diverged - this didn't just affect the party leadership - was pathetic and undignified.

I'm still ashamed of that today. Nobody cares about the Honeckers either

cared for. Without the church's help, they would have been homeless.

We were once 2.3 million SED members. If she and her family members had voted differently on March 18, 1990, the outcome would have been different. Not even in the anonymity of the voting booth did they acknowledge the socialist idea.

Well, the PDS got almost 1.9 million votes back then, or 16.4 percent.

I stick to my theory.

Helga Wittbrodt (1910-1999),

Studied medicine in Berlin, 1930 SPD, 1936 doctorate, senior and specialist at the Berliner

Hospital Am Urban. Active in anti-fascist resistance. 1945 KPD, chief physician and director of the municipal hospital in Berlin-Tempelhof, discharged in 1948 and moved to the eastern part of Berlin, chief physician at the Charité. In 1949 she was appointed chief physician and medical director of the GDR government hospital. She shaped this institution until 1988. Member of the People's Chamber (for the DFD) from 1950 to 1990

Ulbricht's medical history is documented in: "Walter and Lotte. The Ulbrichts in self-testimonies, letters and documents.« Published by Frank Schumann, Berlin 2003. Ulbricht suffered a circulatory collapse at around 10:30 p.m. on June 14, 1971, after he had greeted Brezhnev at the airfield hours earlier, on the eve of the party conference. Afterwards he had the reception for the foreigners

Party conference guests took part. Hermann Axen delivered his prepared speech the other day. On the night of June 18th to 19th, Ulbricht suffered another heart attack. Apart from age-related wear and tear and blood pressure problems, Ulbricht was in good shape until the end of the 1960s. The only operation - a procedure on the gallbladder - had taken place a long time ago in the Kremlin Hospital. At the beginning of 1966 and in the summer, however, there were problems with blood circulation in the heart for the first time.

Nothing serious, but finger pointing. In the fall of 1969, however, a flu-like effect noticeably reduced performance, and there was also a steadily rising blood pressure. Treatments in Barvycha near Moscow - the last one took place in the spring of 1971 - only briefly improved his condition. That there was a causal connection between his deteriorating health and the extreme psychological pressure

Ulbricht had been exposed since 1968, even non-medical people saw it. Ulbricht felt his strength dwindling and repeatedly asked his doctor Arno Linke at the beginning of 1971: "I have to hold out until the end of June, then do whatever you want with me, doctor!"

On the night of

On July 14th to 15th, four weeks after the party conference, Ulbricht suffered a heart attack. Only now did he agree to stay in the hospital. The infarction caused parts of the brain to receive insufficient blood flow. This resulted in symptoms of paralysis on one

side. There were also problems with the digestive tract. In order to have enough energy for the party conference, Ulbricht had eaten a lot of fruit and vegetables and taken laxatives. Self-treatment began to develop into an intestinal obstruction, but this could be resolved without surgery. Nevertheless, Lotte Ulbricht had reason to

Worries. "Circulatory complications – even fatal ones – can occur with just a change in the weather," she had been told outside the hospital room door. Ulbricht, slowly recovering, responded to the Politburo's suggestion that he report his health to the press. After consultations with the doctors, he formulated one himself, and Lotte Ulbricht typed it up. Ulbricht added handwritten: "Dear Erich! Above is the draft press release proposed after consultation with doctors. I ask the comrades of the Politburo for approval. 9.8.71. Kind regards, Walter." At the Central Committee plenum in September, four weeks later, Honecker circulated Ulbricht's medical files since 1966. On October 26, 1971, Ulbricht unexpectedly took part in the Politburo meeting, where he harshly criticized his successor for publishing his

Medical history criticized what constituted a violation of applicable law and Lenin's party norms. Such infamy was without precedent in the history of the German workers' movement. Ulbricht then suffered the circulatory collapse that Rainer Fuckel treated. Honecker then stipulated that Ulbricht, as Chairman of the State Council, would only be allowed to work three to four hours a day but would no longer be allowed to travel. His participation in meetings was limited to two hours and his speaking time to a quarter of an hour. "That means that we will have no further discussions." In November 1971, the People's Chamber re-elected Ulbricht as State Council Chairman, although Günter Mittag had made it clear at the Politburo meeting on October 26th that this was not desired: »Is it at all right and expedient for you to be chairman of the State Council again?

are suggested? Your behavior doesn't justify it."

The agra in Leipzig-Markkleeberg was the GDR's agricultural exhibition on 190 hectares. It has been held annually since 1952 and was open to international professionals and the public. It was a subordinate institution of the GDR Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food. Agricultural equipment, machines, stables and process technologies as well as animal performance shows were shown. It has been a permanent exhibition since the mid-1960s (until 1990).

On June 19, 1971, on the sidelines of the party conference, Brezhnev visited Ulbricht in Wandlitz. On June 20th Honecker came for an hour, on June 25th again and

a little longer. On June 30th, Honecker and the entire Politburo came to congratulate him; that revealing photo was taken in a housecoat and slippers. After that, no one came to visit anymore. At that time, Rainer Fuckel started working for Ulbricht in Wandlitz.